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Stevia leaves are incredibly sweet — much sweeter than sugar. Stevioside, a chemical that makes up 6-18 percent of the leaf, is thought by some researchers to be 100 times sweeter than a 10 percent solution of sucrose. Studies indicate this chemical also appears to have utility in bringing down high blood pressure. Stevia appears to have antibacterial, antiviral, and antifungal properties. Extracts of the plant have been sold as food additives in Brazil and Japan. Much of our information about Stevia comes from a Paraguayan Scientific Analysis presented by Dr. Moises N. Bertoni December 1905.

Your Sweet Tooth Will Take To Stevia

EDITOR'S NOTE: Today, we debut a new column by correspondent Loretta Sorensen devoted to healthy eating. It will run on the Healthlines page on alternating Mondays.

BY LORETTA SORENSEN
P&D Correspondent

When I found stevia a few years ago, I thought I'd found the equivalent of gold. A product far sweeter than sugar, reasonably priced, no calories, little impact on blood sugar levels, etc., etc. So what's not to love?

A closer look at stevia reveals that researchers are still testing how the body responds to it and what disadvantages there could be in using it.

One surprising thing I found is that stevia can cause an allergic reaction in people with allergies to ragweed, chrysanthemums, marigolds, daisies and other plants in the Asteraceae/Compositae family.

If you're taking medication, check with your physician about how stevia could affect your medications. It's known to decrease how well the body eliminates lithium. It also interacts with anti-diabetes drugs and high blood pressure medications.

The stevia plant is native to South America and used as a sweetener for hundreds of years. It has also been used to make medicine. It wasn't until 2008 that stevia was pronounced a safe food additive in the U.S.

Be aware that not all stevia brands taste the same or have the exact same ingredients. I've been using NuStevia by NuNaturals. The ingredient label reads quite differently from other brands.

In my research I've learned about Stevia in the Raw, which, makers say, "derives all its sweetness from the stevia extract. Other leading stevia brands include ingredients like erythritol and isomaltulose, which contribute additional sweetness to their products. The high purity level of our product (Stevia In The Raw has the highest Reb-A content of the branded stevia sweeteners available today) eliminates

the need to 'mask' any unappealing aftertaste that may be present in less pure stevia products." So I'll be reading my Stevia label much more closely, and trying the taste of each product.

Kal stevia powder ingredients indicate it is "100 percent stevia extract powder," with no added ingredients.

If you really want to manage the quality and content of

your stevia, you might consider growing Stevia Rebaudiana in your back yard. It's said to be easy to produce, however not as easy to use as available extracts. The plant's green fibers can be an unwelcome aspect of the raw plant in drinks or foods and the dried leaves don't dissolve as

well as the extract. Author of "The Omni Diet," (St. Martin's Press 2013), Tana Amen, BSN, RN, says that, technically, stevia extract isn't "totally natural" because a water-extraction process is used to obtain the extract from dried stevia leaves. The resulting product is then refined using ethanol, methanol and crystallization.

Stevia differs from aspartame in that the stevia extract undergoes ultrafiltration to remove those alcohols, making it "a safer, less processed sweetener" than aspartame.

It all seemed so simple to start with: replace sugar with stevia. Looks like there's more to learn and consumers will be wise to learn more about stevia and its properties.

Learn more about stevia at these sites:

www.webmd.com - search for stevia
<http://health.yahoo.net/experts/dayinhealth/stevia-safer-sweetener201>

http://www.adobenido.com/blog/2012/southwest_food_and_recipes/all-stevia-sweeteners-are-not-alike/

RECIPE:

From: www.lessugarnaturally.blogspot.com

1 liter carbonated water
1 lemon
1 lime (can use 2 lemons)
Stevia liquid or powder to taste

Juice the fruit, add to carbonated water. Add stevia and combine well. Chill or pour over ice and enjoy.

Oz And Roizen

How To Save Your Own Life

BY MICHAEL ROIZEN, M.D., AND MEHMET OZ, M.D.

King Features Syndicate, Inc.

When "Can a Song Save Your Life?" opened at the Toronto Film Festival, producers were hoping a song could save their film. We're hoping you'll give a more positive answer to a slightly different question: Can you save your own life? Emergencies such as choking, poisoning or severe bleeding can happen when you're on your own. So here's our quick rundown of how to make sure you come out of the crisis in good shape.

Choking: If you get something stuck in your throat, dial 911 and leave the phone off the hook. Then make a fist. Place your thumb below your rib cage and above your belly button. Grasp your fist with your other hand. Press the pair into the area with a hard, fast upward motion. OR lean over a table edge, chair or railing. Quickly thrust your upper belly area (right below your ribcage) against the edge. Repeat until you dislodge the stuck object.

Severe bleeding: This is surprising: DO NOT immediately use a tourniquet unless you're a doc or under a doctor's supervision (that's how Dr. Oz helped a plumber save a woman's life this summer). Use clean cloths or paper towels to press down hard on the wound. If the pressure doesn't stop the bleeding, then apply a tourniquet above the wound, never on a joint.

Poisoning: If you have a poisoning emergency, dial 911. If you think you might have ingested too many meds or dangerous chemicals, call Poison HELP at 800-222-1222. Don't induce vomiting — that could make things worse.

WHAT YOUR PEE TELLS YOU ABOUT YOUR HEALTH

Will Rogers, that most philosophic of humorists, once said: "There are three kinds of men. The one that learns by reading. The few who learn by observation. The rest of them have to pee on the electric fence for themselves." We don't know if he was right or not, but we are certain that "reading" your pee can tell you a lot about your health.

Four to eight times a day you'll pass urine, a mix of more than 3,000 chemicals and water, to remove toxins, salts, nitrogen metabolites, excess nutrients and liquid from your body so that your metabolism, blood pressure and brain can function optimally. So here's your guide to "reading" your pee for signs of trouble:

Color changes: Well-hydrated pee is colorless or slightly yellow — unless you take a multivitamin (half of one in the morning and half in the evening). It's the vitamin B complex that makes for bright-yellow vitamin P! If your urine is darker, it means you need to drink more water. Aim for around 64 ounces a day (more if you sweat a lot). Some medications can temporarily make urine turn fluorescent green (the antidepressant amitriptyline) or blue (the diuretic triamterene).

Odor Changes: Most of the time urine is odorless (unless you're in the subway in August), but diabetes can trigger a sweet smell, and a pungent odor might indicate kidney stones or an infection. And then there's asparagus;



OZ AND ROIZEN

Dr. Mehmet Oz and Dr. Michael Roizen

some people are genetically predisposed to have an enzyme that produces that post-asparagus aroma.

GET VACCINATED AGAINST MEASLES!

Thirteen years ago, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention declared that measles were eliminated in the United States, and we rejoiced that the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine had made this scourge go the way of disco and the mullet. In the days before the vaccine, 3 to 4 million people in North American contracted measles every year; more than 1,000 developed a chronic disability, such as brain dysfunction, because of the disease; and 400 to 500 people died, many of them children.

Since the vaccine, measles-related deaths and severe brain dysfunction have largely disappeared. But during the first eight months of this year, there were 159 cases of measles in 16 states — the largest outbreak in the U.S. since 1996. How could this happen when immunization virtually wiped out the disease?

Well, 131 of the cases hit folks who had never been vaccinated. Chances are the infections came in on unvaccinated travelers who are from or have been in a country where measles is still a problem. When they landed on our shores, they infected those Americans who also haven't been vaccinated.

So far, there haven't been any reported deaths, but measles can trigger a high fever, congestion, sore throat and a body-covering rash. Out of every 1,000 children who get the measles, one or two will die.

Most states require children to get the MMR vaccine in order to attend public schools. But if you or your kids haven't received the vaccine, talk to your primary-care doc about getting one ASAP. You'll protect yourself, your kids and others in your community as well.

GO NUTS FOR WALNUTS

Paulie "Walnuts" Gualtieri, Tony Soprano's sidekick, was always frantically worried about his health. Clearly, he had no idea that his nickname was a fountain of youth! Turns out, eating 2 ounces of shelled walnuts a day can make your blood vessels more flexible (a sign of heart health), improve your cholesterol levels and help with high blood pressure, glucose control and insulin regulation. In short: It can make you healthier, happier and protect your heart, brain, sex life, kidneys and that youthful glow on your skin!

But walnuts aren't the only nuts that have turned out to help you achieve a

younger RealAge! One mega-study that looked at results from 25 clinical trials found that eating around 2.4 ounces of nuts daily lowers total cholesterol by 5 percent, heart-and blood-vessel-damaging low-density lipoprotein by more than 7 percent and improves the ratio of LDL to heart-friendly high-density lipoprotein by 8 percent. Triglyceride levels declined by more than 10 percent for folks who started out at 150 or higher. The studies included macadamia, pistachio, hazelnuts or peanuts (not really nuts; they're legumes), but not Brazil or pine nuts. So here's the scoop on these tasty morsels:

- 2-3 ounces of pistachios a day lowers total cholesterol levels (from around 210 mg/dL) by slashing LDL and raising HDL after only a month.

- Eating almonds daily preserves HDL levels while lowering lousy LDL by up to 19 percent.

- A handful of hazelnuts daily may slash your risk for heart disease and may help protect you from some cancers and dementia.

CURB TEEN BINGE DRINKING

You may think the toga party thrown by Bluto (John Belushi) and his Delta Tau Chi pals in the 1978 movie "Animal House" was an exaggeration of adolescent drinking habits for riotously comic effects. But a new report makes us wonder, and worry. Interviewing more than 16,000 high-school seniors, researchers found that 20 percent downed five or more drinks in a row in the past two weeks; 10 percent say they slammed down 10 or more; and almost 6 percent admitted to 15 or more in one long binge. And it's not just the boys; now 20 percent of girls are doing it, too.

Excessive drinking damages teens' still-developing brain, memory and motor skills, while putting them at risk for lethal alcohol poisoning, being victims of violent crime, traffic accidents, and depression and anxiety. Plus, they may have high-risk sex and develop alcohol problems as adults. But you can do a lot as a parent or significant adult in your favorite teen's life to help a kid avoid all that.

- Explain (calmly) the risks. And DO NOT overindulge yourself. If teens see you do it, they assume it's OK for them too.

- Talk about how alcohol marketing targets them, so they can understand that drinking isn't actually so cool.

- Don't drink with your kids or supply them with alcohol. That signals a go-along-to-get-along attitude that's a slippery slope.

- Make your kids feel that they're special and their future is bright, so they understand doing anything (alcohol or drugs) that compromises them is heartbreaking to you and a waste for them.

Mehmet Oz, M.D. is host of "The Dr. Oz Show," and Mike Roizen, M.D. is Chief Wellness Officer and Chair of Wellness Institute at Cleveland Clinic. To live your healthiest, tune into "The Dr. Oz Show" or visit www.sharecare.com.

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Mental Health Classes For Area Students Offered In 2014

High school students interested in the mental health field are encouraged to start planning ahead for next summer when Southeast Job Link (SJL), in cooperation with Yankton Area Mental Wellness, Inc. (YAMWI), will offer Exploring Mental Health Careers. Classes will be held from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. on May 28-30 and June 2-6, 2014.

Students will meet with experienced professionals, from the Yankton region, who are working in varied areas of the mental health field. Students will be involved in interactive experiences, meeting as a group with individuals who have mental illness, who will share their experiences to educate others. Tours will in-

clude visits to mental health care providers and facilities within the community.

Pre-registration is required. A fee is required; some scholarships are available for those in financial need. For more information contact Sheri Duke or Teresa Rentsch at Southeast Job Link, Inc., 1200 West 21st Street, Yankton, SD 57078, or email sduke@southeast-joblink.org / trentsch@southeast-joblink.org. Telephone 605-668-3480, Fax 605-668-3482.

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Celia and Amy Miner

Save the Date: June 27-28, 2014

Riverside Park

Watch for fundraisers as teams are forming now!

Welcome back First National Bank South Dakota and Avera Sacred Heart Hospital Teams.

For more information on how to get your team started contact the Avera Sacred Heart Cancer Center at 668-8850.

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Long-Term Care Session Set For Today At Library

A Long-Term Care Educational Session will be held at 2 p.m. today (Monday) at the Yankton Community Library, 515 Walnut St.

Sessions will include basic information on long-term care, the costs related to it, how to plan for long-term care needs, what Medicare and Medicaid will cover and how the Long-Term Care Partnership Program can help.

For more information, contact Kristin Kellar at (605) 773-3165 or kristin.kellar@state.sd.us, or visit <http://www.ltcpartnership.sd.gov/>.

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