

Colonoscopy

Prior to the introduction of colonoscopy, colorectal cancer was the leading cause of cancer deaths. Colonoscopy screening can lower the risk of dying from colorectal cancer by 20-60 percent.

From the US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF): "Colonoscopies are generally recommended for routine colorectal cancer screening from age 45 to 75. While some individuals may continue to have them after 75, the decision to continue screening should be made on a case-by-case basis with a healthcare provider, and screening is generally not recommended for those over 85." The American Cancer Society recommends stopping screening for those 85 and over.

About 50,000 to 53,000 people in the United States are estimated to die from colorectal cancer each year, in spite of the advances in medicine. Human neglect of their body, unhealthy lifestyle, undisciplined behavior and attitude about regular medical check-up, and misinformation on the social media are some of the reasons why modern medicine has not been able to cut down those statistics.

Colonoscopy today is a lot more comfortable using a 1 cm. fiberoptic flexible tube with a camera, a source of light, and ability to take minute biopsies, compared to the larger bore, rigid, tube in the past. Light sedation eliminates anxiety and discomfort, and the patient wakes up feeling good with the wonderful side-effect of the opioid propofol.

Cologuard, which needs a prescription, is a non-invasive, FDA-approved stool test for screening colon cancer is about 92 percent accurate in detecting colon cancer, but not as effective as colonoscopy in detecting colon polyps, where are pre-cancerous, and Cologuard also has a higher false positive rate (detecting cancer when there is actually no cancer). Colonoscopy is preferred for a more definitive diagnosis, at the same time the patient can enjoy the "high" from propofol.

For those 85 and over, Cologuard may be the option for those who are concerned. The best is to consult with your physician.

Sleep and inflammation

Not getting enough good quality sleep, called sleep deprivation, is associated with markers of inflammation, such as increase in inflammatory molecules, including cytokines, interleukin-6, c-reactive protein (the marker that is elevated in people risk for heart disease and diabetes,) and others. While lack of restful sleep negatively affects the clarity of mind, mood, memory and energy, the inflammation sleep deprivation causes is of major importance. Inflammation is a big factor in the causation of many diseases, even cancer.

Listen to your body

Without pain, persons would burn their hand touching a hot stove, much like people with severe diabetes and nerve damage to the feet who could have a nail in their foot and not even knowing. I saw one such patient. Pain and other bodily discomfort are helpful warning signal that alert us that something needs to be checked, sometimes by physicians. Some of the other symptoms, besides aches and pains, could include toothache, headaches, thirst, stomach upset, dizziness, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, loss of weight, frequent tiredness, feeling of being unwell, unease. We must listen to our body because it is an existential ally, which has its own “intelligence,” a preference for a healthy lifestyle, and a warning system.

Keto for cognition?

The keto diet is a high-fat (70 percents of the total calories), moderate protein, and very low carbohydrates dietary plan that aims to induce ketosis, where the body primarily burns fat for energy, instead of carbohydrates.

A new study suggests that the keto diet might protect age-related cognitive decline, which is very common among seniors and super seniors. The mechanism is still a concept: using ketones as an alternative brain fuel, and ketosis may help protect against cognitive decline by providing neurons with energy when glucose metabolism is impaired. Normally, glucose is the main fuel of the body for energy. This initial finding needs large scale studies “to confirm if, indeed, a ketogenic diet can consistently be maintained and offer long-term protection, particularly in individuals at risk for Alzheimer’s and whether it can be effectively incorporated into a broader treatment regimen,” according to researchers.

The keto diet, while usually effective for weight loss, has several potential dangers, including nutritional deficiencies, digestive problems, and increased risk for certain ailments. It can also lead to keto flu symptoms and long-term health issues. It is prudent to consult with your physician or dietician before you embark on any new diet regimen.

MS and microbiome

Around 2.9 million people around the world have multiple sclerosis, a chronic neurological disorder where the body's immune system attacks the central nervous system. It is a disease that worsens as time passes by, termed MS exacerbation.

The risk factors for MS includes genetics, which is non-modifiable, and those which are modifiable, like smoking, unlight exposure (vitamin D deficiency), viral infection, diet, and gut health (imbalanced microbiome).

MS reduces longevity by 6-7 years on average, a 2-fold increased risk for death. But the more concerning are the symptoms neurologic symptoms due to brain volume and grey matter loss, cognitive issue, pains, tremors, muscular cramping, inability to walk, poor balance, fatigue, dizziness, excessive urination at night, persistent urge to urinate, blurred vision, and others.

A new study in mice showed that the ratio of two types of bacteria in the gut microbiome may be able to predict the severity of the MS, and that bacteria among persons with MS differ from those healthy individuals. The composition of those bacteria varies across different studies. Bacterial balance is essential to health. More independent research is need to pinpoint what bacteria and the ideal ratio would be conducive to harmony and balance needed to prevent, minimize, or treat Multiple Sclerosis and other illnesses as well. Microbiome (gut bacteria) health is vital to our general well-being.

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