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Health Wise is the monthly Wellness newsletter containing information about different programs and services offered throughout the year, as well as providing current information and articles on health and wellness related topics.

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If you're not a current subscriber and would like to continue to receive *Health Wise*, please send an email to wellness@iwu.edu and let us know if you would like to receive the newsletter in print or as an e-version in PDF format. If you would like the print copy, we need to know your name and department or home address. If you would like to receive the e-version, please make certain that we have your correct email address.

For more information about the IWU Wellness Program, visit our website at www.iwu.edu/~wellness.

We hope you enjoy *Health Wise*.
Missy Smock, Director of Wellness

www.iwu.edu/~wellness

HEALTH wise

SEPT 2011

The Hidden Harm of Excitotoxins

Fair warning: If you are drinking a diet drink, munching on chicken-flavored crackers or enjoying a fast-food lunch while you're reading this, odds are good that you'll toss them out by the time you finish the article. Why? Because many low-calorie sodas, highly flavored snacks and processed foods of all kinds contain substances known as excitotoxins — substances that could very well be doing a serious number on your health.

Food manufacturers have long used excitotoxin substances to pump up the flavor of their products, and food manufacturers continue to insist they are safe. But in recent years, many health experts have regarded both excitotoxins and manufacturers' assurances with increasing concern. Excitotoxins are a class of chemicals (usually amino acids) that overstimulate neuron receptors. The Center for Science in the Public Interest has put excitotoxins aspartame and mono-sodium glutamate (MSG) on its list of food additives to avoid (for details, see www.cspinet.org/additives).

Much recent research suggests that regularly consuming excitotoxins like MSG and aspartame over an extended period of time can destroy significant numbers of brain cells and lead to serious health problems, including seizures and strokes. According to Russell L. Blaylock, neurosurgeon and author of *Excitotoxins: The Taste That Kills*, excitotoxins have also been linked to human neurological disorders such as multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease.

The chemicals in excitotoxins stimulate the taste cells in the tongue, causing the flavor of the foods we eat to be greatly enhanced. Manufacturers often

pack soups, snacks, sauces, gravies, many low-fat and vegetarian processed foods with "flavor enhancers" in an effort to make them taste irresistible. Although excitotoxin poisoning has gotten much of its recent publicity under the rather misleading title "Chinese Restaurant Syndrome," the fact is, American processed foods — from McDonald's to Weight Watchers to Campbell's soup — are just as likely to contain excitotoxins like MSG and aspartame (NutraSweet® or Equal®). And according to many experts, these same foods are just as often to blame for the headaches, water retention, skin problems and other health complaints that some consumers experience.

As a general rule, the more a food is processed, the more likely it is to contain MSG. Foods that commonly use MSG include potato chips, flavored crackers, canned soups, dry soup mixes, canned meats, diet foods, soy sauces, salad dressings, cured meats and poultry injected with broth. But reading the labels won't always help you.

When a food product is 99 percent pure MSG it is called "monosodium

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THE HIDDEN HARM OF EXCITOTOXINS — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

glutamate” by the FDA and must be labeled as such. However, when a food product contains less than 99 percent MSG, the FDA doesn’t require that the MSG be identified. So it often appears on labels in various disguised forms, such as “hydrolyzed vegetable protein,” “spices” and “natural flavoring.” Here’s a quick list of potentially suspect ingredients to watch for (when in doubt, call the manufacturer to inquire).

- **Ingredients that may contain 30 to 60 percent MSG:** hydrolyzed vegetable protein, hydrolyzed protein, hydrolyzed plant protein, plant protein extract, sodium caseinate, calcium caseinate, yeast extract, textured protein, autolyzed yeast, hydrolyzed oat flour, Accent.

- **Ingredients that may contain 12 to 40 percent MSG:** malt extract; malt flavoring; bouillon; broth; stock; natural flavoring; natural beef or chicken flavoring; seasoning; spices.

- **Ingredients that may contain some MSG:** carrageenan; enzymes; soy protein concentrate; soy protein isolate; whey protein concentrate; some soy-milk.

Small amounts of MSG are found naturally in many common foods such as seaweed, mushrooms, whole grains, carrots, meat, nuts and cheese. In its natural state, however, MSG is slowly assimilated by the human body and broken down so that the levels of concentration are kept low. The MSG in processed foods, on the other hand, is highly concentrated. And when people eat these foods, says Blaylock, they unwittingly bombard their brain cells with excitotoxins in large enough quantities to cause real trouble.

If you eat a predominately healthy diet and you’re not particularly sensitive to MSG, then a can of soup that lists MSG as the last ingredient on the label may not cause you much trouble. But if you guzzle diet sodas every day and your idea of a snack is a chunk of MSG-laden sausage on an MSG-laden cracker, it might be a good idea to assess whether limiting or eliminating the excitotoxins in your diet will make you feel better.

George R. Schwartz, MD, author of *In Bad Taste: The MSG Syndrome*, believes there are three general categories of symptoms that result from MSG consumption:

Allergic Symptoms: rash, hives, asthma (shortness of breath), sneezing, and running nose.

Peripheral Symptoms: flushing, jaw tightness, headache, rapid heartbeat, chest tightening, diarrhea, stomach cramps and arthritis.

Central (Brain) Symptoms: depression, insomnia, confusion, and paranoia.

Source: Article written by Matthew Solan, Experience Life for Care2, <http://www.care2.com/greenliving>

SPECIAL SPEAKER SESSION

Finding Food In Farm Country — *why it matters for health and wealth*

Speaker: Ken Meter
Crossroads Resource Center

Thursday, Sept. 8, Noon-1:00 p.m.
Joslin Atrium, Memorial Center

This workshop will feature a presentation on the recent central Illinois study of the farm and food economy by nationally recognized food systems analyst Ken Meter. Mr. Meter will share the results of this study and discuss the opportunities in our communities to boost economic development, create and retain wealth, and provide greater access to fresh, affordable, locally produced foods. The presentation will be followed by a Q&A session with audience members.

Everyone is welcome, please feel free to bring a lunch and a friend.

NUTRITION BITES

Recipe of the Month

Avocado, Tomato and Mango Salsa



Looking for a refreshing salsa! Serve with tortilla chips, or serve on white fish for a fantastic treat!

1 mango, peeled, seeded and diced	½ cup chopped fresh cilantro
1 avocado, peeled, pitted, and diced	3 cloves garlic, minced
4 medium tomatoes, diced	1 teaspoon salt
1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced, or canned jalapenos	2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
	¼ cup chopped red onion
	3 tablespoons olive oil

Directions:

In a bowl, combine the mango, avocado, tomatoes, jalapeno, cilantro and garlic. Stir in the salt, lime juice, red onion and olive oil. To blend the flavors, refrigerate for about 30 minutes before serving.

Source: <http://allrecipes.com>

WELLNESS TIDBITS

The Fall 2011 Activity Program is underway; if you have not received a registration form and are interested in participating in one of the many activity classes offered on campus, please contact Wellness at x3334 or wellness@iwu.edu.



Don't flush or throw away unused drugs! Illinois Wesleyan has a **Drug Disposal Program** that is an easy and convenient way to dispose of prescription and over-the-counter drugs safely. There is a drop-box on the IWU campus located in the entry of the Security Building at 110 E. Graham St. The drop-box site is open 24/7.

Guidelines for Disposal

Take unused and unwanted prescription and non-prescription drugs to IWU Security or other drop-off locations. Keep medications in original bottles or packaging if possible. Mark out your name and address on prescription labels.

Drop-off sites routinely send collected medications to be incinerated as part of the ecological and safe disposal protocol. (Incinerated medications are able to create energy used to power homes and businesses.)

For more information please contact Wellness at x3334 or wellness@iwu.edu.

Get Fit While You Sit

We make office calls

Wellness would like to come to your office and offer you an opportunity to "get fit while you sit." For some, the workday doesn't afford many opportunities to move about. This inactivity can contribute to lower fitness levels and lead to work-related injuries. For those interested in preventing these problems, we offer three in-office workshops:

Desktop Yoga

Strength and Stretch at Your Desk

Ergonomics 101 (One-on-one ergonomic evaluations available by contacting Wellness)

If you and your co-workers are interested in any of these in-office sessions, please let us know. You can contact us at wellness@iwu.edu or call 556-3334 to set up an appointment.

On-Site Massage Therapy

Wellness offers on-site massage therapy throughout the week. Therapy sessions are by appointment only. You can enjoy a refreshing 30-minute massage or a thoroughly relaxing 60+ minute massage. It's up to you.

On-site cost:

30-minute massage \$28

60-minute massage \$56

To schedule an appointment, please contact Wellness at 556-3334 or wellness@iwu.edu.



FALL HEALTH SCREENINGS

Cholesterol, Blood lipids, Metabolic Panel, Iron & PSA Screening

Tuesday, Oct. 18, 7:30-9:00 a.m.

Davidson Room, Memorial Center

The following screenings will be available for employees of Illinois Wesleyan who are participants in the health insurance plan.

If you would like to participate in the screening, you will need to **reserve a space** by calling the Wellness office at **556-3334**, no later than Friday, Oct. 14.

Participants of the IWU health plan are covered for these services. If you or immediate family members are not insured by IWU and wish to participate in the screening, payment is required at the time of the service.

Cholesterol and Lipid Panel

A 12-hour fast is required prior to the Cholesterol and Lipid Panel nothing to eat or drink except water.

Blood Pressure Screening: If you have not had your blood pressure checked recently, please take a moment to update yourself on this information. You can do it in less time than it takes to call a friend for lunch.

Note: The results of all screenings are strictly confidential and may be sent directly to your physician, if requested at the time of service.

WELLNESS WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS

To register for the Wellness Workshops, please call 556-3334 or email wellness@iwu.edu.

Third Annual Saucy Salsa Throwdown!

Tuesday, Sept. 20, Noon-1:00 p.m.

Hansen Center Court

IWU Wellness and Multicultural Student Affairs are teaming up to bring you a Saucy Salsa Throwdown! Use up the last of those summer tomatoes, put together your best salsa or salsas, and enter to win a gift certificate to your favorite local Hispanic restaurant.

To register your salsa, at 556-3334 or wellness@iwu.edu by Sept. 11.

Shirk Fitness Center Gets New Strength Equipment!

Don't know how to use the equipment...don't fret, attend one of the many orientation sessions. These sessions are designed to give you basic knowledge of how to use the new equipment.

Sept. 20, 12:15-1:00 p.m.

Sept. 21, 26 & 28, 4:45-5:30 p.m.

Please contact Wellness prior to training dates to reserve a space, 556-3334 or wellness@iwu.edu

Adult CPR Certification

Monday, Oct. 17, 5:45-7:45 p.m.

Shirk North Classroom

The Wellness Program will be offering Adult CPR training again this spring. Please let us know if you are also interested in receiving child and infant certification.

Please contact Wellness to reserve a space at 556-3334 or wellness@iwu.edu. Family members are welcome to participate in this session, space permitting.

HEALTH STUFF AND MORE

The best medicine happens when a doctor and patient collaborate on a plan to heal, feel better, and age better. To get good care, you have to look for it, work at it and know when it's time to change.

Tips:

The right physician can make such a big difference to your overall well-being that it is worth the effort to nurture the relationship—or time to find someone else.

Find a Team Player. Compassionate doctors are open to other disciplines of medicine. They should recognize the possibility that other practitioners may be doing something they are not. They keep an open line of communication with other care providers their patients are seeing.

Find a good listener. Think of how it feels when you're really heard. Perhaps your concerns are mirrored back. In a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 72 percent of physicians interrupted their patients' opening statement within an average of 23 seconds. Doctors are used to feeling rushed, and often feel the need to quickly tell a patient what is wrong and what to do about it. However, rushing a diagnosis can end up depriving a doctor of key clues to a patient's ailment. Both doctor and patient must listen. At the beginning of a visit tell the doctor you have questions—this will alert them that you're expecting to discuss your issues. Bring two copies of your list of questions, so you can go over your concerns together.

There is no room for arrogance in the doctor-patient relationship. Does your doctor dislike it when you bring in an internet printout? Does he or she dismiss questions? There is a good reason bedside manners matter to your health: Patients

who are treated with dignity and respect are more likely to stick to their doctors' recommendations and to get preventive services, according to a 2005 survey published in the *Annals of Family Medicine*. **How to take charge:** Acknowledge you know the doctor is busy, but explain that you have concerns you want addressed. Simply doing that may change the conversation.

Source: *Whole Living*, September 2011

5 Reasons to Drink Green Tea

Looking for a simple resolution to improve your overall health? Start drinking green tea. Green tea is a potent source of catechins — healthy antioxidants that can inhibit cancer cell activity and help boost immunity. Need more reasons to drink green tea? It can also:



- Lower cholesterol levels and rates of heart disease
- Help protect against bacterial infections
- Promote joint health and stronger bones
- Reduce inflammation
- Enhance the effects of antibiotics, even against drug-resistant bacteria and “superbugs”

Green tea is available in a wide range of varieties — introduce yourself by substituting a cup of green tea for a cup of coffee, or add a glass of iced green tea to your afternoon ritual and you will soon be enjoying the health benefits of this delicious beverage! Learn to appreciate the subtle fragrance of good-quality green tea and use teatime to unwind, meditate and take respite from the stress of the day.

Source: www.drweil.com/drw/u/TIP04162/5-Reasons-to-Drink-Green-Tea.html