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Heart to Heart

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Grapefruit, Durian, Etc.

Does grapefruit affect some medications?

Yes, there are several medications that should not be taken with grapefruit or grapefruit juice. This fruit or its juice inhibit a group of enzymes in our body (CYP3A4), resulting in higher level of the medications getting out of our intestines into our blood stream and the entire body. So, this can lead to overdose. One glass of grapefruit juice can inactivate these enzymes for half a day to 36 hours. Some of the groups of medications thus affected include certain calcium channel blockers, hormones, chemotherapeutic agents, sedatives and tranquilizers, some cholesterol lowering drugs, some psychiatric drugs, antiarrhythmic heart medication called Amiodarone. The most prudent thing to do if you are on any medications and love grapefruit or grapefruit juice is to discuss this with your physician.

Does orange juice increase the good cholesterol?

In a study on patients with mild to moderately high cholesterol levels, who were given 3 glasses of orange juice a day to drink for three months, the level of good cholesterol (called HDL, or High Density Lipoprotein) increased by an amazing 21%. The anti-cholesterol drugs available today lower the total cholesterol and the bad cholesterol (LDL, or Low Density Lipoprotein) but does not significantly increase HDL. So, this preliminary report on orange juice is certainly most welcome. The good effect of orange juice could be from the flavonoids it contains, a component of plants. Grapefruit is also an aid in cholesterol control. More extensive studies are needed to make any final scientific conclusions, but this initial data are very encouraging.

Does coffee raise our blood pressure?

Yes, most definitely. A cup of regular coffee or two can raise the blood pressure even among those not predisposed to hypertension. For those who suffer from high blood pressure, drinking coffee, even only a cup a day, makes the blood pressure shoot up for at least four hours. Healthy lifestyle, regular medical check-up, taking prescription medications, and moderation, are the key to health.

Does condom protect one from AIDS?

Only complete abstinence from sexual activity and from needle sharing (especially among addicts) can guarantee protection from AIDS. The use of condom, in general and to a great extent, may lessen the transmission of AIDs, but this is not a guarantee. A significant number of condoms come from the factory, defective or with tiny holes, or weak spots. There are more than 17 million people in the world who are HIV-infected. Don't be one of these statistics.

Is Durian an aphrodisiac?

Durian, the fruit that has the distinct reputation for its “bad smell but heavenly taste” (tho not for all) has been bantered around as one that increases sexual libido. There is no scientific evidence Durian is an aphrodisiac. If anything at all, the smell alone might turn off some lovers, or excite those who love its taste.

Is wine really good for our heart?

Yes, more specifically red wine. It is not the alcohol in its that is good for our heart. The ingredient in red wine called Resveratrol has been found to be cardio-protective. This comes from the skin of the grapes used to make these red wines. Pinot Noir has the highest Resveratrol content among red wines. Somehow, white wine does not confer the same significant health benefit. Neither do beer nor most liquor, which do not contain this special ingredient.

Is self medication safe?

Buying over-the-counter medications on your own, following advice from friends or relatives who may be taking such drugs as prescribed by their physician, is dangerous. Allergies and some deadly complications have been reported in medical literature, even with the ingestion of so called “common and simple” household pill like aspirin. I have seen severe reaction to aspirin. There is no drug that has no possible side effects. None. All medications, including prescription meds, have possible adverse effects, some mild, others severe, or even fatal. Each person reacts differently to specific drugs. What is good and effective for one may be harmful to others. About 3 years ago, I did open heart surgery on a patient in Hobart, Indiana, USA. She was recovering very well but complained of her gout. On the fourth day after surgery, her internist ordered a pill for her gout. She had a violent reaction to the medication and rapidly went on to develop kidney, liver, and general organ failure, and subsequently died within four days from taking the medications. Always consult a physician before taking any medications you have not taken before.

Is it bad to take a shower every day?

No, it is healthy to take a shower (or more often as needed), but taking a shower or bath daily rubs our skin of the essential moisture it needs to stay healthy and comfortable. The best thing to do is to use skin moisturizer after each shower or bath and repeated two or more times thereafter. Moisturizers keep our skin soft, comfortable, healthy, and younger-looking. The same thing with lip moisturizers.

Is taking antibiotics often dangerous?

Yes, it is not only expensive but very dangerous. In our body, there are so called “good bacterias” which help in the normal metabolism and function of our body, and are thus essential to our health. The bacterias we want to kill with antibiotics are the “bad bacterias” that cause us diseases. If we have an infection that is properly diagnosed by a physician, he/she will prescribe the specific antibiotic that is effective for a particular bug or groups of bugs causing the malady. Not all germs are killed by the same antibiotics. If one takes antibiotics indiscriminately, the “good bacterias” in our body will die and fungus infection will emerge, because the normal (protective) balance is disrupted. Also, if antibiotics are used often, the “bad bacterias” will get used to them and become resistance to the antibiotics, making them ineffective in fighting infection.

Why does eating a lot diminish male sexual libido?

Effective erection is made possible by blood pooling in the male organ, filling it well with blood, causing the engorgement necessary for effective penetration. A full stomach will divert the blood from all other organs to the stomach to aid in the digestion, thus lessening the blood supply to the male genital. The same mechanism explains why one feels sleepy after eating, the blood to the brain is somewhat diverted to the stomach. And the resultant sleepiness and sluggishness are also factors in reducing the libido, even among the females. Obviously, there are other factors that come into play. Among teenagers and those below 30s, nothing seems to reduce their libido, because of their high hormonal levels.

Is dental flossing really necessary?

Brushing our teeth after each meal is an excellent idea, but it is not enough. Using the toothpick is also good but it is not enough. Brushing does not remove all food trapped in between our teeth. While toothpick helps get rid of the bigger particles, the smaller pieces caught in between the tighter spaces between our teeth can only be removed by dental flossing. If not removed, the trapped food particles decay, much like a rotten piece of dead meat, causing severe halitosis (bad breath). Using mouthwash should also be a part of the daily routine because this kills germs that cause bad breath. Chewing gums (sugarless) helps.

Does body deodorant cause cancer?

There is currently no scientific proof that using body (armpit) deodorant causes cancer. If the person is not allergic to it, using deodorant, especially by those with body odor, can prevent the social disaster of offending people around them.