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CHANGING HABITS  
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## Nutrition Notes

### March 2018

- **Gastroparesis:** A damaged vagus nerve may interfere with signaling the stomach muscles to contract and push food into the small intestine, causing nausea, bloating, vomiting, feelings of fullness, acid reflux, lack of appetite, malnutrition and unpredictable blood sugar changes. Changes in the rate and amount of food passing into the small intestine can cause erratic changes in blood sugar levels, which in turn make gastroparesis worse. There is no cure for gastroparesis, but nutrition therapy definitely has a role in decreasing symptoms, improving blood glucose for those who have diabetes and maintaining adequate fluids and nutrition.
- **Low Carbohydrate Diet/Neural Tube Defects:** A recent study at the Univ. of N.C. at Chapel Hill recently found women with low carbohydrate intake are 30% more likely to have babies with neural tube defects compared to women who do not restrict carbohydrates. Folic acid is the essential nutrient that minimizes the risk of neural tube defects and is added to enriched breads, cereals, flours, pasta and rice. Almost half of all pregnancies in the U.S. are unplanned so women generally do not initiate folic acid supplementation until later in pregnancy after a neural tube defect may have already occurred. If a woman is considering getting pregnant, she should stop any carbohydrate restriction.
- **PCOS and Gut Microbiome:** A recent study indicates women with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) have significantly less diversity in their gut microbiomes which is associated with hyperandrogenism compared with healthy women. It is suggested androgens may be an important factor in shaping the gut microbiome and that changes in the gut microbiome may influence the development and pathology of PCOS. This is fascinating as we learn more and more about the importance of bacteria in our gut and overall health.
- **Fish Oil and Omega-3's:** The reason to take a fish oil supplement is to obtain a source of omega-3 fatty acids EPA & DHA, of which the body only manufactures a limited amount. Potential benefits include reducing TG, raising HDL cholesterol, reducing risk of sudden death from cardiac arrhythmias, reducing some forms of inflammation as in RA, decreasing depression/anxiety symptoms, blunting response to high mental stress, memory enhancement, improvement of muscular strength and/or endurance. *These are potential benefits, not absolute as of yet.* A general daily dose is 300-500 mg of EPA+DHA; some treatments may require doses up to 4,000 mg/day. Absorption of EPA/DHA is enhanced if taken with high fat meal. Excessive EPA/DHA can suppress the immune system so it is recommended not to take >2 grams unless medically advised. Eating fish 2x/wk may be better than taking a fish oil supplement; caution with fish high in mercury.

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