

Nutrition Notes

Allergic Response to Red Meat: Research on Alpha-Gal Syndrome began a mere 20 years ago in response to severe reactions to meat in individuals being treated with a new drug: Cetuximad. The cause was found to be an IgE antibody response to galactose-alpha-1,3-galactose or alpha-gal – a carbohydrate found in many animals. But how were patients not receiving this medication developing the same allergy? A tick bite. Researchers now believe that exposure to the proteins in tick saliva may sensitize individuals to alpha-gal leading to an allergic response to red meat.

Dry January: Although moderation of alcohol intake is recommended year-round, there is a growing movement that encourages a month of sobriety in the new year. This “mindful drinking approach” came about as a reaction to over-indulgence during the holidays, and it has become more popular because of the increase in alcohol consumption during the ongoing pandemic. Studies indicate an increase of 14% in frequency of alcohol intake during the first year of the pandemic compared to a year prior, with a 41% increase in heavy drinking among women. Short-term abstinence of alcohol is shown to lead to better sleep, more energy, weight loss, and improvements in skin.

Vegan and Alternative Meat Sources: One of the fastest growing food industry trends is plant-based “meat.” This emergence is due to a variety of concerns, including the impact on animal products on health, environmental issues, and animal welfare. As these products become more widely available, more patients will rely on healthcare providers to guide their choices. Ensuring patients are educated about label-reading to select nutrient rich foods is key when transitioning to a diet that includes meat alternatives.

New Blood Glucose Monitor: A new product to simplify blood glucose testing was released in November 2021. The POGO Automatic is an all-in-one system that provides the lancet and testing in one piece of equipment. POGO is available to consumers without a prescription for \$68 with an additional \$32 for cartridges that have 50 tests. With private insurance and a prescription, patients will pay no more than \$59 for up to 150 tests. At this time, this product is not covered by any government healthcare program.