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See page 68

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Change for the Better

Your morning java provides more than just a wake-up boost.

Coffee is America's top source of antioxidants, according to a recent study from the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania.

Antioxidants, of course, are compounds that absorb free-radical molecules that can lead to cancer and age-related ailments. Coffee is the lead source both because we drink so much and because it has a decent level of antioxidants.

The more antioxidant-rich foods you include in your diet the better, says Joe Vinson, the chemist who led the study. To help you do that, here are five foods to swap to get a bigger antioxidant boost.

EXCHANGE: COFFEE FOR TEA

Black tea, which makes up most of the popular blends, ranks much higher than coffee in terms of antioxidants. So make like the British and exchange your coffee for tea. "Two cups a day appear to be beneficial," Vinson says.

EXCHANGE: BEER FOR WINE

Beer made the top 10 antioxidant list because of sheer volume consumed, but red wine is the better way to go. By volume, it has more antioxidants.

EXCHANGE: FRUIT JUICE FOR FRUIT

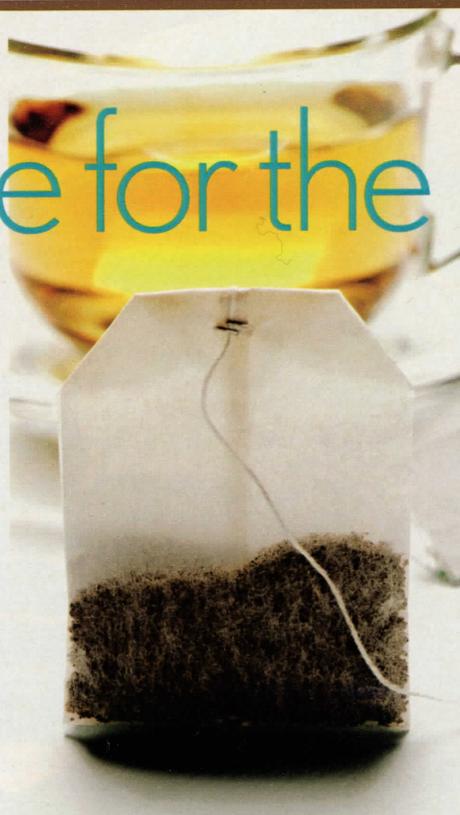
The general rule for getting the most antioxidants: The closer to the plant the better. "Whenever possible, eat the original," Vinson says.

EXCHANGE: BANANAS FOR DATES

A staple of every grocery store visit may be bananas, but next time go on a date for dates. "Of all the foods I studied, dates have the most antioxidants based solely on serving size," Vinson says.

EXCHANGE: MILK CHOCOLATE FOR DARK

"The milk in milk chocolate prevents a lot of the antioxidants from getting into your body," Vinson says. DOUG DONALDSON



A FORGIVING HEART

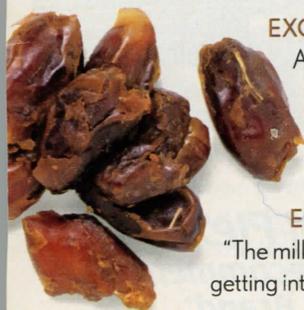
Does your blood boil every time you see the next-door neighbor who chopped down a magnificent oak tree that shaded your deck for years?

You may want to let it go. A growing body of evidence suggests that forgiving others may be good for your own heart. A recent study at the University of Tennessee shows that forgiveness can lower blood pressure and heart rate. "Holding a grudge is hard work; it places a lot of demand on the heart," says Kathleen Lawler-Row, a psychology professor at the University of Tennessee and the study's lead investigator. "Choosing to forgive an offender reduces anger, depression, and anxiety, all of which affect cardiovascular health."

Another study of couples with troubled marriages found higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol in those who said they could not forgive their spouses over an issue or problem, says the study's author, Everett L. Worthington Jr., a psychology professor at Virginia Commonwealth University and executive director of A Campaign for Forgiveness Research.

Dr. Richard A. Stein, director of preventive cardiology at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York, and an American Heart Association spokesman, discusses this mind-body connection in his new book, *Outliving Heart Disease*. One of the guidelines he gives for preventing and treating heart disease is to know how >> on 264

MORE HEALTHY FAMILY >> on 264





A FORGIVING HEART >> from 262

thoughts and feelings affect health. Negative emotions may promote hardening of the arteries and even trigger a heart attack. Stein says that reducing hostility, anger, stress, and depression can lower the occurrence of cardiac problems.

Forgiveness, alas, doesn't always come easily. One method, developed by Worthington, uses the acronym REACH to teach people how to forgive. How it works:

- **RECALL THE HURT** Try to remember the hurt objectively without feeling victimized.
- **EMPATHIZE WITH THE PERSON WHO HURT YOU** Try to understand the other person's perspective and feel compassion toward the offender.
- **ALTRUISM** Realize we are all alike in that we have hurt others too. When we are forgiven, we experience freedom and gratitude. Give the gift of forgiveness to the person with whom you now empathize.
- **COMMIT PUBLICLY TO FORGIVE** Forgiveness becomes real when you say it aloud or write it in a letter rather than keep it private (you don't have to deliver the letter).
- **HOLD ONTO FORGIVENESS** When painful memories resurface, it doesn't mean you're still holding a grudge. Remind yourself that you've forgiven that person and have moved on. BETSY DRU TECCO

LOW-FAT A BUST?

Lowering dietary fat has long been thought to reduce a host of maladies, including heart disease and cancer, but a major study showed that's simply not true. Sort of. This first-of-its-kind study on low-fat diets discovered that among women who decreased their fat consumption, there was no reduction in the rates of colorectal cancer, stroke, or heart disease. The study did find that women who reduced the fat content of their diets had a 9 percent lower risk of breast cancer, but that difference isn't high enough to be considered statistically significant.

The National Institutes of Health's Women's Health Initiative conducted this largest-ever study on low-fat diets and included more than 48,000 women.

Reducing fat intake doesn't have all the benefits once imagined, but that doesn't mean it's time to make a beeline for the butter. Keeping fat content low still helps keep your waistline in, according to Barbara Howard, one of the study authors and a researcher at MedStar Research Institute in Hyattsville, Maryland.

"Our country's biggest nutrition issue is still weight, and if you want to lose weight, you have to eat less and exercise more," Howard says. "You can't only look at fat or carbohydrates, you have to count total calories."

So where should fat tip the scales in your diet now? Keep your fat intake between 20 and 35 percent of all your calories, with unhealthy saturated fats making up less than 10 percent of calories, according to the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Aim for most of your fats from polyunsaturated and monounsaturated sources, such as fish, nuts, and vegetable oils. Also, if you have heart disease or are at risk for heart disease, your saturated fats may need to be further lowered.

Another lesson from the study: Eat smart, now. The women in the study were 50 to 79 years old and may not have benefited from dietary changes because they started later in life. "One of the things we learned from the study is that you may need to start eating better younger in life," Howard says. DOUG DONALDSON

FEEL THE HEAT Need a quick and simple way to feel refreshed? Rub your hands together vigorously until they feel toasty warm, says Alfredo Carvajal, director of spa development at Canyon Ranch. Then cup your hands over your closed eyes for 10 seconds or so. While you're doing that, breathe in deeply and exhale slowly a few times. Repeat this elegant and effective technique as needed. It works because of the close connection between the eyes and the overburdened brain. Applying the gentle heat and energy of your hands to the eyes also counteracts the feeling of being tired. LORINUDO 