

Wellness

Wednesday



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Healthy-Seeming Foods And Drinks Scientifically Linked To A Shorter Lifespan

Longevity is a goal many of us strive for, seeking to live long, healthy, and fulfilling lives. While certain factors like genetics and environmental influences play a role, a significant portion of our lifespan is within our control through the choices we make, particularly when it comes to our diet and lifestyle. Contrary to popular belief, however, some foods and beverages that are often touted as 'healthy' may actually be detrimental to our longevity.

In this Wellness Wednesday, we'll explore nine seemingly wholesome edibles that scientific research has linked to a shorter life expectancy. By understanding the underlying mechanisms and health risks associated with these items, we can make more informed decisions to support our long-term well-being. So, let's dive in and uncover the surprising truths about these longevity-compromising consumables.

Alcohol: The Deceptive Culprit

For years, the notion of red wine's heart-healthy benefits has been widely accepted. However, recent studies have challenged this perception, revealing that even moderate alcohol consumption, including red wine, may contribute to the onset of various health issues. Dr. Amy Myers, a functional medicine expert, explains, "New reports conclude that even moderate drinking, including red wine, may contribute to the onset of cancers, high blood pressure, and atrial fibrillation - and also indicate a significant increase in premature aging and death when drinking 25 grams of alcohol daily." This equates to less than two cocktails, two 12-ounce beers, or two 5-ounce glasses of wine per day.

Dr. Sara Szal Gottfried, a clinical assistant professor at Thomas Jefferson University, further emphasizes that alcohol, in any amount, is detrimental to longevity. She explains that alcohol is a neurotoxin that disrupts sleep, raises cortisol levels, and negatively impacts blood sugar regulation - all of which can wreak havoc on overall health. The notion that alcohol, even in moderation, can provide any benefits for longevity has been thoroughly debunked.

Fruit Juice: The Sugar Trap

Fruit juice is often perceived as a healthy alternative to sugary sodas, but the reality may surprise you. Dr. Nilda Abellera, the medical director of Infuze MD, cautions that unless the juice is freshly squeezed, it likely contains high levels of added sugar and lacks the fiber found in whole fruits. Many commercial fruit juices can contain as much as 30 grams of sugar per serving, which is on par with the sugar content in soda. Excessive sugar intake is widely recognized as detrimental to health, with the American Heart Association recommending no more than 36 grams per day for women and 25 grams per day for men.

The lack of fiber in fruit juice also means that the body absorbs the sugars more rapidly, leading to blood sugar spikes and increased risk of chronic conditions like obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. While the natural sugars found in whole fruits are accompanied by beneficial nutrients and fiber, the concentrated sugar in juice can have the opposite effect on longevity.

Diet Sodas: The Artificial Sweetener Dilemma

The allure of diet sodas often stems from the belief that they are a healthier alternative to their sugary counterparts. However, the scientific evidence suggests otherwise. Dr. Nilda Abellera explains that the artificial sweeteners commonly used in diet sodas, such as aspartame, sucralose, and saccharin, have raised concerns due to their potential impact on metabolism, health risks, disruption of insulin response, and alteration of gut microbiota.



Furthermore, Dr. Alexander Golberg, a family medicine doctor, highlights that the artificial sweeteners in diet sodas negatively impact the beneficial bacteria in the gut, which can have far-reaching consequences for immune health and overall well-being. Dr. Sara Szal Gottfried succinctly sums up the impact of artificial sweeteners on longevity, stating, "Artificial sweeteners are a good idea gone wrong."

Charcuterie: The Processed Meat Trap

Charcuterie boards, with their artfully arranged cured meats, may appear to be a healthier snacking option. However, the reality is quite different. Dr. Norma Barbosa Rivera, an internal medicine doctor, explains that there is strong evidence linking processed meats, such as those found in charcuterie, to various forms of cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.

Dr. Nilda Abellera elaborates on the underlying issues, stating that the additives used in processing, such as nitrates and nitrites, are associated with an increased risk of cancer, particularly colorectal cancer. Processed meats also tend to be high in sodium and saturated fats, which can elevate blood pressure and cholesterol levels, thereby increasing the risk of heart disease. While charcuterie may be visually appealing, it is not a longevity-supporting food choice.

Granola Bars: The Masquerading Culprits

Granola bars are often marketed as healthy snacks, but Dr. Alexander Golberg cautions that this perception may be misleading. "Often marketed as healthy snacks, many granola bars contain high amounts of sugar and unhealthy fats," he explains. For example, some granola bars are made with coconut oil, which is high in saturated fat - a type of fat that has been linked to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

To ensure that a granola bar is truly healthy, it's essential to check the nutrition label and look for options that are low in sugar, saturated fat, and sodium, while also containing at least three grams of fiber per serving. Carefully scrutinizing the ingredient list can help distinguish the genuinely nutritious granola bars from the ones that may be masquerading as healthy but are actually detrimental to longevity.

Flavored Yogurt: The Sugar Surprise

Yogurt is often touted as a healthy snack or breakfast option, but the flavored varieties may not be as beneficial as they seem. Dr. Nilda Abellera cautions that "Flavored yogurts may seem nutritious, yet they often contain significant amounts of added sugars." Dr. Alexander Golberg echoes this sentiment, stating that many flavored yogurts are loaded with added sugar.

While plain yogurt can be a nutritious choice, the artificial flavorings and high sugar content in flavored yogurts can undermine their potential health benefits. To enjoy the benefits of yogurt without the added sugar, it's recommended to opt for plain yogurt and sweeten it with fresh fruit or a small amount of honey, which will provide more fiber and natural sweetness without the detrimental effects of excessive added sugars.

For example, many smoothies from popular chains like Jamba Juice can contain between 43 and 100 grams of sugar per serving. This level of sugar intake can have significant implications for longevity, as it is associated with an increased risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. When making smoothies at home, it's essential to carefully monitor the sugar content by using whole, fresh fruits and avoiding added sweeteners.

Acai Bowls: The Superfood Trap

Acai, a nutrient-dense berry, has been hailed as a superfood with numerous health benefits. However, Dr. Sara Szal Gottfried cautions that acai bowls, a popular health food trend, may not be as beneficial as they appear. "When I see an article on superfoods, it makes me slightly crazy. Is eating an açai bowl the size of a soccer ball really a good idea?" she questions.

Gottfried explains that for most people, consuming an entire acai bowl can significantly increase blood sugar levels, which can elevate the risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and obesity. The high sugar content, even from natural sources, can have detrimental effects on longevity when consumed in excess. While acai berries may possess some health-promoting properties, the way they are typically prepared and served in acai bowls may undermine their potential benefits.

Heat-and-Eat Meals: The Additive Concern

Convenience often comes at a cost, and this is particularly true when it comes to heat-and-eat meals. Dr. Alexander Golberg shares that these prepared meals, designed to be quickly heated in the microwave or oven, are often made with harmful additives. Two specific additives of concern are butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA) and butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT), which have been shown to cause cancer in animals and potentially alter DNA.

The inclusion of these concerning additives in many heat-and-eat meals can have long-term implications for health and longevity. While the convenience of these pre-prepared options may be appealing, it's crucial to carefully read labels and opt for minimally processed, additive-free meals whenever possible to support your long-term well-being.

In our pursuit of longevity, it's essential to be aware of the hidden pitfalls that may be lurking in some of the foods and drinks we consume regularly. From seemingly healthy alcoholic beverages to seemingly nutritious snacks and beverages, the scientific evidence has revealed that many of these items can actually be detrimental to our lifespan.

By understanding the underlying mechanisms and health risks associated with these longevity-compromising consumables, we can make more informed choices to support our long-term well-being. Opting for whole, minimally processed foods, limiting added sugars and artificial sweeteners, and being mindful of portion sizes can go a long way in promoting a longer, healthier life.

Remember, while genetics and environmental factors play a role, a significant portion of our lifespan is within our control through the daily decisions we make. By being vigilant and making conscious choices, we can set ourselves up for a fulfilling and long-lasting journey.



VIRGIN MOJITO (NOJITO)



INGREDIENTS

Ingredients

- 10 small fresh spearmint leaves
- 1/2 medium lime, cut into 3 wedges, divided
- 1 tablespoon monk fruit sweetener, stevia, or sugar
- 7 ounces lemon-lime seltzer, club soda, or sugar-free lemon-lime soda
- 1 cup ice cubes, as needed

Indulging in a refreshing cocktail can be a delightful experience, but what if you're looking for an alcohol-free alternative? Enter the Virgin Mojito, also known as the "Nojito" - a vibrant and zesty mocktail that captures the essence of the classic Cuban cocktail without the rum. So if you are avoiding alcohol, this sugar-free, non-alcoholic delight is the perfect solution to satisfy your craving for a sophisticated and flavorful beverage.

UNDERSTANDING THE NOJITO

A Nojito is a non-alcoholic version of the traditional Mojito, a Cuban cocktail made with rum, lime, mint, and soda water. The key difference between a Mojito and a Nojito is the absence of rum, making the Nojito a completely alcohol-free alternative. While the Mojito is a beloved classic, the Nojito offers a refreshing and versatile option for those seeking a similar flavor profile without the intoxicating effects of alcohol.

HERE'S HOW TO BATCH YOUR NOJITOS:

Multiply the ingredients by the number of drinks you need to serve. Muddle the mint, lime, and sweetener in a large pitcher. Just before your guests arrive, add the lemon-lime seltzer or club soda and stir gently. When ready to serve, fill individual glasses with ice and pour the pre-made Nojito mixture to the top.

Nutrition Information

Serving: 1 tall glass, Calories: 13 kcal, Carbohydrates: 16 g, Protein: 0.5 g, Sodium: 2.5 mg, Fiber: 1 g, Sugar: 0.5 g



HOW TO MAKE IT

1. In a sturdy tall glass, place the mint leaves and 1 lime wedge. Use a muddler and crush the mint and lime to release mint oils and lime juice.
2. Add remaining lime wedges and 1 tablespoon sugar, and muddle again to release the lime juice. Do not strain the mixture.
3. Fill the glass almost to the top with ice and fill the glass with club soda.
4. Stir and garnish with a few sprigs of mint. Serve with a straw.

MORE MOCKTAIL RECIPES TO EXPLORE

The Virgin Mojito is just the beginning of the exciting world of non-alcoholic cocktails, or "mocktails." If you're looking to expand your repertoire of refreshing and sophisticated alcohol-free beverages, be sure to check out these additional recipes:

- Sparkling Strawberry Lemonade Mocktail
- Ginger and Turmeric Wellness Tonic
- Peach Bellini Mocktail
- Spiced Apple Cider Mocktail
- Pineapple Coconut Refresher

https://www.self.com/gallery/core-circuit-workout?intcid=inline_amp

Featured Exercise ▶ Squat to Standing Crunch



HOW TO DO IT:

- Start with your feet hip-width apart, core engaged, and hands held in a prayer or fist at chest height.
- Do a squat by hinging at the hips, sending your hips back, and bending both knees until thighs are parallel to the floor.
- As you stand, lift your right knee and twist to tap it to your left elbow—a standing twisting crunch.
- Place your right foot back on the floor and immediately drop into another squat.
- Next time as you stand, bring your left knee up and tap it to your right elbow—doing a twisting crunch on the other side.
- Continue to repeat, alternating sides.
- Make it easier: Eliminate the twisting crunch and as you stand, raise alternating knees to chest height, pausing for a moment to work on balance. Or eliminate the leg raise entirely and do bodyweight squats.



THE BENEFITS:

The Squat to Standing Crunch mimics everyday movements and activities, such as bending, twisting, and standing up, making it a valuable exercise for improving overall functional fitness and movement patterns.

Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.



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