

Nutrition Action

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HEALTH LETTER®

FOR SCIENCE IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

HOW TO LOWER YOUR RISK OF CANCER

THE LOWDOWN ON
ESSENTIAL OILS

APRIL FOOLS!
Food label tricks

*The best
soft cheeses*

M E M O

IT'S RAINING SUPPLEMENTS



Never underestimate the creativity of an American industry to exploit a market opening. It's like that small hole in your roof. The rain finds it and, before you know it, you're sitting on your living room couch

holding up an umbrella.

And so it goes with dietary supplements, a grab bag category of products, including vitamins, minerals, and herbals. The story dates to the late 1980s, when an outbreak of an obscure illness called eosinophilia-myalgia syndrome sickened more than 1,500 people and led to at least 37 deaths.

The outbreak was ultimately attributed to a contaminated L-tryptophan amino acid supplement made in Japan. As a result, the FDA moved to require "good manufacturing practices" and restrict misleading claims on supplements.

The supplement industry sprang into action, generating some 200,000 letters opposing FDA action. It also enlisted the help of powerful allies in Congress who had financial ties to the supplement industry.

The paradoxical result was the 1994 Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA), which left the FDA with even fewer tools to police the supplement marketplace than before.

That's where the drip, drip, drip turned into a torrent. By 2017, what had been a fledgling industry tallied \$43 billion in domestic sales.

And thanks to DSHEA, the FDA doesn't even know what's being sold. The vast majority of facilities go uninspected in any

given year. When they are, more than half are cited for violations.

Moreover, the marketplace is contaminated by false or misleading claims. DSHEA permits companies to make so-called structure-function claims (like "promotes brain health"), but not claims that mention a disease (like "prevents Alzheimer's"). Got that?

Most supplements have never been adequately tested—or, if they were, they failed to beat a placebo—in a randomized controlled trial. Meanwhile, the FDA has detected hundreds of supplements tainted with prescription

drugs (usually for sexual enhancement or weight loss).

And some supplements can cause serious adverse effects (think ephedra, now banned) or drug interactions (think St. John's wort). Others supplant effective drugs (think "opioid detox" supplements).

In February, the FDA [sent letters warning](#) 17 supplement companies that their claims to "prevent, treat or cure" Alzheimer's or other

diseases were unapproved drug claims. Commissioner Scott Gottlieb also promised a "larger effort" to strengthen the FDA's regulation of supplements. That's a good start.

It will be tough to squeeze this proverbial genie back into the pill bottle. The FDA needs more resources and more authority to police a marketplace flooded with ineffective and sometimes dangerous products. But that's what you get when an industry with powerful friends finds a small hole in the roof.

Peter G. Lurie, MD, MPH, President
Center for Science in the Public Interest



Illustration: Jorge Bach/CSPI.

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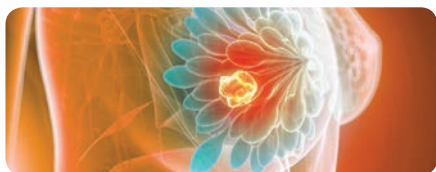


HOW TO LOWER YOUR RISK OF CANCER

BY BONNIE LIEBMAN

Cancer is the #1 killer of Americans [aged 45 to 84](#). [Smoking](#) accounts for about 30 percent of those deaths. [Lifestyle](#)—excess weight, inactivity, poor diet, and alcohol—accounts for another 16 percent. Here's what may help.

BREAST



One in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime. The five-year survival rate averages 90 percent. That's because most tumors are detected early.¹

You have a higher risk if you:

- are an older woman
- have excess weight (and you're postmenopausal)
- are sedentary
- consume alcohol often
- have a relative—especially a mother, sister, or daughter—who was diagnosed with breast cancer
- have mutations in genes (like BRCA1 and BRCA2) found in families with high rates of breast cancer
- had menstrual periods that began before age 12 or menopause that began after age 55
- were older than 30 when you had your first child
- took estrogen and progestin after menopause
- have dense breast tissue (seen on a mammogram)
- have abnormal breast cells (atypical hyperplasia or carcinoma in situ)

DIET, EXERCISE, ETC.

Gaining weight—even as little as an extra 10 to 20 pounds—is linked to an increased risk of breast cancer after menopause.² Why?

“We have compelling evidence that higher blood levels of estrogen are associated with an increased risk of postmenopausal breast cancer,” says Regina Ziegler, a former researcher at

the National Cancer Institute's Division of Cancer Epidemiology & Genetics.

“In postmenopausal women, the ovaries no longer produce estrogen,” explains Ziegler, “so the dominant source is estrogens that are made in fat tissue in the breast and elsewhere.” (Dominant, that is, unless women take replacement hormones, which also raise risk.)

Excess insulin and inflammation may also spur tumors to grow.

Among postmenopausal women not taking hormones, those with the highest insulin levels had twice the risk of breast cancer—and those with the highest levels of c-reactive protein (a marker of inflammation) had a 67 percent higher risk—than those with lower levels.^{3,4}

Also, women who have even a few servings of alcohol a week have a 10 percent higher risk of breast cancer than those who don't drink. One to two daily drinks were linked to a 19 percent higher risk.⁵

In contrast, “physical activity is protective,” notes Ziegler, “though it's not clear whether it works by itself or by preventing weight gain.”

Other possible protectors: “The evidence has strengthened that vegetables and fruits may be associated with a reduced risk of breast cancers, especially estrogen-negative and other aggressive tumors,” says Ziegler.⁶ (Estrogen-negative cancers are less common, but more difficult to treat.)

“Though we can't say definitively that fruits and vegetables can help prevent breast cancer, they're worth eating to lower the risk of strokes, heart attacks, type 2 diabetes, and obesity.”

Warning signs: a painless lump in the breast or underarm area. Less-common symptoms: breast pain or heaviness, thickening, swelling, redness, discharge, nipple turned inward.

COLON & RECTUM



It's a success story. The death rate from colorectal cancer in 2016 was less than half of what it was in 1970.¹ One troubling sign: while colorectal cancer is dropping in older adults, it's inching up in adults younger than 55.

You have a higher risk if you:

- are 50 or older
- have excess weight
- are sedentary
- eat processed or red meats often
- have a parent, brother, sister, or child who was diagnosed with colon cancer
- have ever had colon polyps
- have ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease
- have type 2 diabetes
- smoke tobacco

DIET, EXERCISE, ETC.

“It's so frustrating that colorectal cancer is still such a massive killer around the world, because there is so much we can do to reduce the incidence,” says Amanda Cross, a cancer epidemiologist at Imperial College London.

Your first step: get a colonoscopy or another screening test.

“Screening has had a dramatic effect on the incidence of colorectal cancer in those over age 50,” says Cross. “Before screening, the incidence was increasing. Now it's coming down.”

And stay in shape. “If you're active and not overweight, your risk is lower,” says Cross.² Healthy insulin levels may help explain why.

“Physical activity increases insulin sensitivity, which can curb high insulin levels,” she explains.



Excess weight often leads to excess insulin, but people with higher insulin levels have a higher risk even if they're lean.⁸

More than two servings of alcohol a day for men—or one for women—is also a risk factor.⁷ The acetaldehyde that's made when the body metabolizes alcohol may be carcinogenic to cells lining the colon.

In 2015, the International Agency for Research on Cancer concluded that each daily (3½ oz.) serving of red meat or (2 oz.) serving of processed meat like bacon, ham, sausage, or hot dogs is linked to roughly an 18 percent higher risk of colorectal cancer. The evidence was stronger for processed meat.²

Carcinogenic N-nitroso compounds may be partly to blame.

"Companies now add less nitrite and add ascorbic acid to processed meats to inhibit the formation of N-nitroso compounds, but they can still form in the body," says Cross.

Meat may harbor other carcinogens.

"There is evidence from animals that two other groups of compounds—heterocyclic amines and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons—are carcinogenic," says Cross. "And both are found in processed and unprocessed red meats cooked at high temperatures."

Warning signs: diarrhea or constipation, feeling that your bowel doesn't empty completely, blood (bright red or

very dark) in your stool, rectal bleeding, narrow stools, gas pain, cramps, feeling full or bloated, unintended weight loss, fatigue, decreased appetite.

ESOPHAGUS



"Esophageal cancer is very rare in the United States," says Christian Abnet, chief of the metabolic epidemiology branch at the National Cancer Institute. That's good, because the five-year survival rate is 19 percent.

You have a higher risk if you:

- are over 55
- have excess weight
- are male
- smoke or chew tobacco
- have acid reflux or Barrett's esophagus

DIET, EXERCISE, ETC.

Esophageal cancer is really two diseases.

Smoking and heavy drinking are major risk factors for esophageal squamous cell carcinoma. But it's esophageal *adenocarcinoma* that's on the rise, and the obesity epidemic may explain why.¹

"Obesity causes inflammation and seems to induce reflux disease by putting pressure on your lower esophageal sphincter," explains Abnet, referring to

the doorway between your esophagus and stomach.

"That pressure makes the sphincter more likely to be open," he adds. "And then you're more likely to have acid reflux, which seems to be part of the carcinogenic process."

But people with reflux needn't panic.

"Reflux is very common," says Abnet. "About 20 percent of U.S. adults have it. But the vast majority don't get esophageal cancer."

Reflux can cause Barrett's esophagus, which means that the cells lining your lower esophagus have morphed into cells like those that line your stomach or small intestine.

People with Barrett's are 24 times more likely to get esophageal cancer than others. But only an extra 24 out of every 10,000 of them develop the cancer each year compared to people without Barrett's.¹⁰

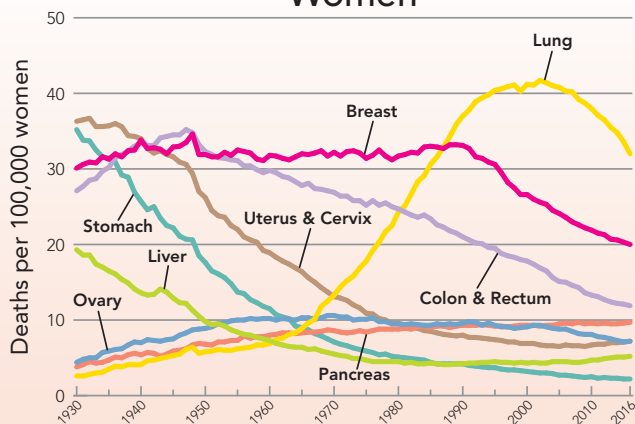
"Some doctors recommend an upper endoscopy to assess whether you have Barrett's if you're over 50, had long-standing reflux disease, and are male," says Abnet. (The risk in women is low.)

"Twenty years ago, people with Barrett's were told to have an endoscopy every year. There was no evidence for that, but it was done in an abundance of caution because early esophageal cancer can be successfully treated, while late esophageal cancer is rarely successfully treated."

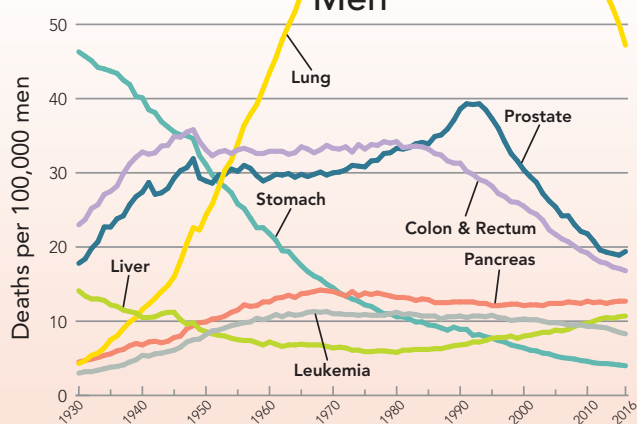
But now most doctors recommend

U.S. Death Rates from Most Major Cancers

Women



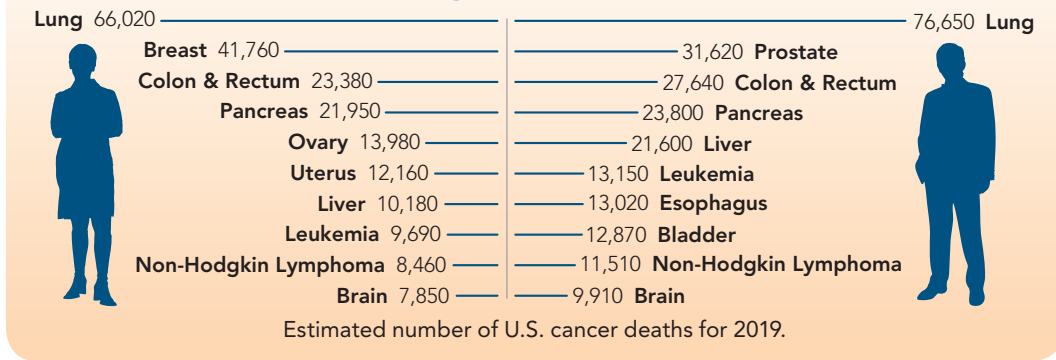
Men



Lung cancer death rates in both men and women are dropping, but the disease still accounts for about a quarter of all cancer deaths. Uterine and cervical cancers are combined because they were not reported separately until 1973.

Source: [Cancer Facts & Figures 2019, American Cancer Society.](#)

Leading Cancer Killers

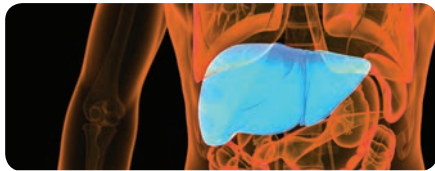


repeated endoscopies only if a biopsy finds precancerous changes.

“If a thorough endoscopy finds Barrett’s but no precancerous cells, patients may be told to just go about their business, but to check with their doctor in five years to discuss further follow-up,” says Abnet.

Warning signs: painful or difficult swallowing, chest pain, unintended weight loss, hoarseness, cough, hiccups, vomiting, bone pain, black stools.

LIVER



Liver cancer rates are rising more rapidly than those of any other cancer. Since 1980, the incidence has tripled and the death rate has doubled. The five-year survival rate is only 18 percent.¹

You have a higher risk if you:

- have chronic hepatitis B or C infection
- have excess weight
- have type 2 diabetes
- are a heavy drinker
- smoke tobacco

DIET, EXERCISE, ETC.

“Excess weight, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, and diabetes are greatly contributing to higher rates of liver cancer in the U.S.,” says Katherine McGlynn, senior investigator in the metabolic epidemiology branch at the National Cancer Institute.¹¹

It’s not clear how they might increase risk, but it is clear that they are all linked.

“Excess weight increases fat storage

in the liver and the risk of insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes,” says McGlynn.

And those changes are linked to inflammation, which can cause scarring.

“There’s a whole cascade of pathology,” explains McGlynn. “Inflammation can lead to liver disease, starting with scarring and progressing all the way to cirrhosis.”

Heavy drinking and smoking are also risk factors. On the plus side, coffee may protect your liver.¹²

“Coffee has been associated with a decreased risk in study after study,” says McGlynn. “The decrease is seen with both caffeinated and decaffeinated, suggesting that an ingredient other than caffeine is providing the protection.”

What may come as a surprise: since 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has advised all baby boomers—anyone born between 1945 and 1965—to get a hepatitis C test.¹³

“The virus circulated in the blood supply until 1992,” says McGlynn.

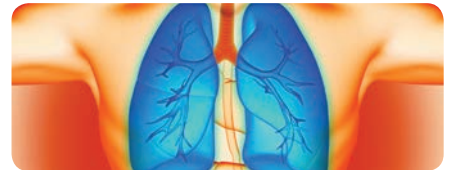
“Before then, anyone who had a blood transfusion or other medical encounter in which they came in contact with blood could have become infected with the virus. And many infections have no symptoms, so people might never know they were infected.”

If you do have hepatitis C (an inflammation of the liver), it can be cured.

“The drugs are expensive,” says McGlynn, “but more insurance companies are covering them because the high price is still cheaper than paying for the long-term consequences.”

Warning signs: bulge or hard lump below rib cage on right side, abdominal pain or swelling, yellow skin or whites of eyes, loss of appetite, unintended weight loss, weakness, fever.

LUNG



Since 1990, death rates for lung cancer have dropped roughly in half in men, and they’ve dropped by about a quarter in women since 2002, thanks to declines in smoking. But lung cancer is still the No. 1 cancer killer...by far.¹

You have a higher risk if you:

- smoke or have smoked tobacco
- have had long-term exposure to radon, asbestos, diesel exhaust, air pollution, radiation, or secondhand smoke

DIET, EXERCISE, ETC.

Roughly 80 percent of lung cancer deaths are caused by smoking.¹ Smokers are 25 times more likely to be diagnosed with the disease than nonsmokers.

“The impact of smoking dwarfs all other risk factors,” says Meir Stampfer, professor of epidemiology and nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Less smoking, not better treatment, largely accounts for falling death rates. Five-year survival rates are still only around 20 percent.

Links with diet and weight are uncertain. In a recent study of roughly 1.4 million people, smokers who reported eating more saturated fat had a higher risk, while those who ate more polyunsaturated fat had a lower risk.¹⁴

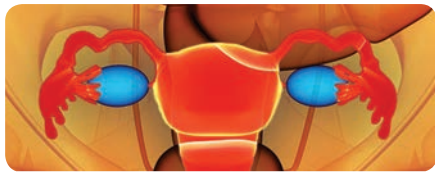
And in an analysis of 1.6 million people, those with larger waists had a higher risk, regardless of their weight.¹⁵

"It's too early to know if a large waist or saturated fat promotes lung cancer or if unsaturated fats curb the risk," says Stampfer.

"But we have plenty of evidence that avoiding abdominal obesity and replacing saturated fats with unsaturated fats can lower the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes."

Warning signs: persistent cough, shortness of breath, chest pain, coughing up bloody mucus, voice change, frequent lung infections like pneumonia.

OVARY



The five-year survival rate is only 47 percent, in part because most patients are diagnosed after the cancer has spread.

You have a higher risk if you:

- have a mother or sister who was diagnosed with ovarian or breast cancer
- have been diagnosed with breast cancer
- have mutations in genes (like BRCA1 and BRCA2) that are found in families with high rates of ovarian cancer
- took estrogen alone or with progestin after menopause
- have excess weight

DIET, EXERCISE, ETC.

Excess weight is linked to a higher risk of ovarian cancer.¹⁶ "But it's not a strong risk factor," says Shelley Tworoger, associate center director of population science at the Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa.

Beyond weight, no clear links with diet have emerged.

"Taking oral contraceptives is associated with a lower risk," says Tworoger.¹⁷

"And women with a family history of cancer, particularly breast or ovarian, should speak to a doctor about genetic testing." Genetics aside, there are no good screening tests.

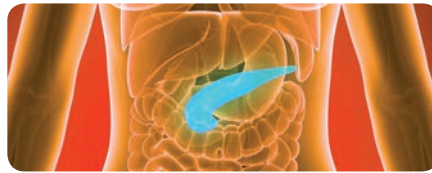
"Several large trials have shown no survival benefit for transvaginal ultrasound and CA 125 as a potential marker for ovarian cancer," says Tworoger.

What might matter: knowing the symptoms, says the CDC's "[Inside Knowledge about Gynecologic Cancer](#)" campaign.

"A large majority of ovarian cancer patients have symptoms like bloating, feeling full quickly, or abdominal pain for a substantial period of time before they're diagnosed," says Tworoger. "If those symptoms persist for no identifiable reason, it's worth getting tested."

Warning signs: abdominal swelling, persistent bloating, pain in the abdomen, back, or pelvis, the need to urinate often or urgently, feeling full quickly.

PANCREAS



Pancreatic cancer accounts for just 3 percent of cancer diagnoses, but the third highest number of cancer deaths. "It's got the worst five-year survival except for some rare cancers," says the National Cancer Institute's Christian Abnet.

You have a higher risk if you:

- have a parent or sibling diagnosed with pancreatic cancer
- have excess weight
- have type 2 diabetes
- smoke or chew tobacco
- have chronic pancreatitis

DIET, EXERCISE, ETC.

"Avoiding excess weight is important for pancreatic cancer," says Abnet.

"That also helps prevent type 2 diabetes, which is linked to pancreatic cancer."

Why might extra pounds matter?

"Obesity induces inflammation, a hallmark of cancer," notes Abnet. People with a large waist also have a higher risk, regardless of their weight.¹⁸

"In people with abdominal obesity, you're getting more inflammation and more fatty tissue infiltrating organs," Abnet explains.

The link with type 2 diabetes is unclear, he adds.

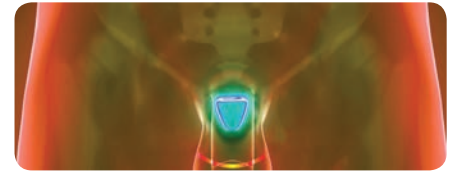
"Does diabetes increase the risk of pancreatic cancer or does the beginning

of cancer in the pancreas cause diabetes? We don't know."

And so far, researchers haven't found a way to do early screening. "You can't do regular pancreatic biopsies," says Abnet.

Warning signs: abdominal pain that may radiate to the back, yellow skin and eyes, unintended weight loss, nausea, vomiting.

PROSTATE



One in nine men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in his lifetime.¹ But the five-year survival rate is 98 percent. In fact, many of those men need no treatment at all (see April 2018, p. 3).

You have a higher risk if you:

- are over 50
- have a father, brother, or son who was diagnosed with prostate cancer
- are of African ancestry

DIET, EXERCISE, ETC.

"The evidence has gotten a bit stronger that overweight men are not more likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer, but they are more likely to die of it," says Harvard's Meir Stampfer.¹⁹

"That's also true for physical inactivity.²⁰ Reducing your risk of dying of prostate cancer is an added bonus to the myriad of good reasons to maintain a healthy weight and not be inactive."

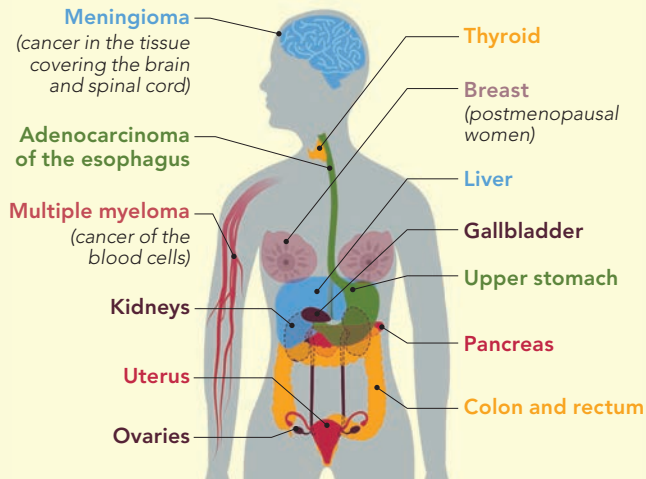
Stampfer cautions against taking selenium supplements.

"We have good evidence that they raise the risk of dying of prostate cancer, so men should definitely avoid them."^{21,22}

"And I would avoid separate calcium supplements and juices or milk with added calcium." Some studies find a higher risk of prostate cancer in men who get more than 2,000 milligrams of calcium a day.²³

Should men get a PSA (prostate-specific antigen) test to screen for prostate cancer? The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force advises men aged 55 to 69

13 cancers are linked to overweight & obesity



Adapted from: cdc.gov/vitalsigns/obesity-cancer.

to discuss the pros and cons with their doctor, given the risk of overdiagnosis and overtreatment.

"I recommend a PSA test every few years for men who expect to live at least 12 to 15 more years," says Stampfer. "If your PSA is below 1.0 at age 60, the risk is so low that you can stop testing."

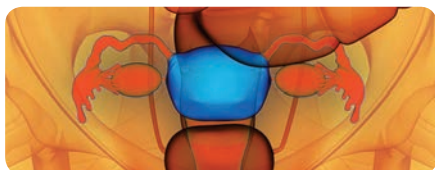
His worry: "The incidence of advanced disease at diagnosis seems to be going back up. Some potentially preventable prostate cancer deaths are being missed. Some guys who didn't get a PSA test may have missed their chance to be diagnosed and treated earlier."

But if you have a high PSA—or a biopsy showing cancer—don't panic.

"The decision to do a biopsy shouldn't be automatic," says Stampfer. "And if a biopsy finds cancer, you should have more tests and consider active surveillance rather than rushing into surgery."

Warning signs: weak or interrupted urine flow, difficulty starting or stopping urine flow, need to urinate often especially at night, sudden urge to urinate, blood in the urine, pain or burning with urination, pain in the back, hips, or ribs that doesn't go away.

UTERUS



Diagnoses and death rates are climbing.¹ Black women have double the death rate of white women, possibly because

they are more likely to have an aggressive type of tumor and are often diagnosed later.

You have a higher risk if you:

- have excess weight
- are sedentary
- started menopause after age 55
- took estrogen without progestin after menopause
- have type 2 diabetes

DIET, EXERCISE, ETC.

"Obesity is the single most important risk factor for endometrial cancer," says Immaculata De Vivo, professor of epidemiology at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.²⁴ (The endometrium is the lining of the uterus.)

"It's one of the cancers that are on the rise because obesity is the main driver," says De Vivo. "It's astonishing to me that it accounts for so much of the risk."

Exercise may help curb risk, in part by preventing weight gain.

"We've also seen a protective effect of coffee," says De Vivo. For example, in the Nurses' Health Study, women who drank four or more daily cups of coffee—the amount in two Starbucks grandes—had a 25 percent lower risk than those who drank less than one cup a day.²⁵

To help catch endometrial cancer early, see your doctor if you have vaginal bleeding after menopause. "Postmenopausal bleeding is not normal," notes De Vivo.

But don't panic. In one recent meta-analysis, postmenopausal bleeding occurred in about 90 percent of women with endometrial cancer, but only 9 percent of women with bleeding were diagnosed with the cancer.²⁶

Warning signs: abnormal vaginal bleeding or spotting, discharge, pain during sex, while urinating, or in the pelvic area. 🍌

- ¹ cancer.org/research/cancer-facts-statistics/all-cancer-facts-figures/cancer-facts-figures-2019.html.
- ² *JAMA* 296: 193, 2006.
- ³ *Cancer Res.* 75: 270, 2015.
- ⁴ *J. Natl. Cancer Inst.* 107: djv169, 2015.
- ⁵ *Int. J. Epidemiol.* 45: 916, 2016.
- ⁶ *Int. J. Cancer* 144: 1496, 2019.
- ⁷ *BMC Medicine* 12: 168, 2014.
- ⁸ *PLoS Med.* 2016. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1001988.
- ⁹ monographs.iarc.fr/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/mono114.pdf.
- ¹⁰ *Gut* 67: 418, 2018.
- ¹¹ *Cancer* 122: 1757, 2016.
- ¹² *Cancer Epidemiol. Biomarkers Prev.* 24: 1398, 2015.
- ¹³ cdc.gov/hepatitis/populations/1945-1965.htm.
- ¹⁴ *J. Clin. Oncol.* 35: 3055, 2017.
- ¹⁵ *J. Natl. Cancer Inst.* 110: djx286, 2018.
- ¹⁶ *PLoS Med.* 2012. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1001200.
- ¹⁷ *Cancer Epidemiol. Biomarkers Prev.* 25: 1059, 2016.
- ¹⁸ *Ann. Oncol.* 26: 2257, 2015.
- ¹⁹ *J. Natl. Cancer Inst.* 109: djw225, 2017.
- ²⁰ *J. Clin. Oncol.* 29: 726, 2011.
- ²¹ *J. Natl. Cancer Inst.* 106: djt456, 2014.
- ²² *J. Natl. Cancer Inst.* 107: djw360, 2014.
- ²³ *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 101: 173, 2015.
- ²⁴ *Int. J. Cancer* 137: 625, 2015.
- ²⁵ *Cancer Epidemiol. Biomarkers Prev.* 20: 2487, 2011.
- ²⁶ *JAMA Intern. Med.* 178: 1210, 2018.

The Bottom Line

To reduce your risk of cancer:

1. Stay away from tobacco.
2. Lose (or don't gain) excess weight.
3. Limit alcohol to two servings a day for men or one for women.
4. Limit red and processed meats.
5. Fill half your plate with veggies or fruit.
6. Shoot for 20 to 40 minutes a day of any exercise that gets your heart beating faster.
7. When you're out in the sun, apply a shot glass of "broad spectrum" sunscreen (SPF 30+) every two hours.
8. Avoid tanning beds.
9. Make sure children get vaccines to prevent HPV (human papillomavirus) and HBV (hepatitis B).
10. Go to cancer.org to see the American Cancer Society's guidelines for when to get a colonoscopy, mammogram, or other screening tests.
11. Go to cancer.gov (the National Cancer Institute) or AICR.org (the American Institute for Cancer Research) to learn more.





21ST CENTURY SNAKE OIL?

3 NEW "Wellness" TRENDS

BY CAITLIN DOW

Adaptogens. Butter coffee. Essential oils. You can find them on websites ranging from Gwyneth Paltrow's Goop to Alex Jones's Infowars. Can they curb stress, fight fatigue, or make you sharper? Or do they just lighten your pocketbook?

ADAPT-TO-EVERYTHING

Feeling run-down? Stressed? Anxious? Adaptogens to the rescue, say enthusiasts.

Ashwagandha, rhodiola, ginseng, and a variety of mushrooms like cordyceps, reishi, and chaga are on most lists of adaptogens—plants that supposedly help your body adapt to stress. (The lists vary because adaptogens aren't clearly defined.)

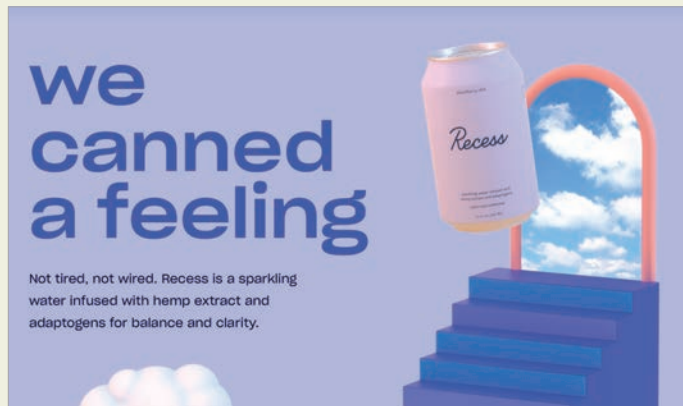
"The charm of adaptogens is that they work with your needs specifically, adapting their function to your body's needs," explained Amanda Chantal Bacon to wellandgood.com in May 2016. (Bacon is the founder of Moon Juice, one of the biggest brands of adaptogen supplements.)

Charming, indeed. But is there evidence that they work? Ashwagandha and rhodiola are the most widely studied adaptogens in people.^{1,2} But based on the best evidence, there's little reason to rush out to your nearest apothecary.

"There's more animal than human data on adaptogens," says Rashmi Mullur, an assistant professor of medicine at UCLA with board certifications in endocrinology and integrative medicine. "There's no strong, high-quality data in people. Most studies are small and of varying quality."

In one of the better trials, 57 adults with mild to moderate depression were randomly assigned to a placebo, 50 milligrams of sertraline (the generic version of the antidepressant Zoloft), or 340 mg of rhodiola every day. After 12 weeks, symptoms of depression were no different between groups.³ (Some antidepressants only beat a placebo in people with severe depression.)

Do adaptogens combat stress and fatigue by "balancing hormones," as some websites claim?



An 8-pack of adaptogen-enhanced water costs \$40. There's no good evidence that it will make you more balanced or clear.

"Small studies in humans show that adaptogens like ashwagandha can lower cortisol, the hormone released in response to stress, in the morning," Mullur explains.⁴ "But cortisol fluctuates throughout the day, so a single measurement doesn't tell you much."

What's more, "the idea of balancing our hormones with a supplement is kind of silly," she adds.

"Our bodies have incredibly nuanced mechanisms for balancing hormones. And hormones have different effects all over the body. If you take a supplement that affects a hormonal pathway, you have no way of controlling its effects. It could make your symptoms worse."

What's more, Mullur points out, fatigue or stress are rarely due to a hormonal imbalance. "I try to work with people to address the source and triggers of their stress. I'm not opposed to using supplements when we have data to support their use, but unless you do something to mitigate or adapt to the stress, just throwing herbal supplements into the mix can muddy the waters."

And you could end up doing more harm than good. Ashwagandha, for example, may increase thyroid hormone levels, which could cause fatigue, anxiety, shortness of breath, and other problems.⁵

The Bottom Line: Claims that adaptogens fight fatigue, stress, or anxiety aren't backed by good human evidence.

¹ *J. Altern. Complement. Med.* 20: 901, 2014.
² *BMC Complement. Altern. Med.* 12: 70, 2012.
³ *Phytomedicine* 22: 394, 2015.
⁴ *Indian J. Psychol. Med.* 34: 255, 2012.
⁵ *J. Ayurveda Integr. Med.* 5: 241, 2014.

HOT BUTTERED BALONEY

“Bulletproof Coffee is not your average latte,” declares Bulletproof’s [website](#). “It’s a high-performance drink that has a massive impact on your energy and cognitive function.”

Bulletproof coffee (also called butter coffee) is meant to replace breakfast. The official Bulletproof recipe transforms a simple cup of joe into a nearly 500-calorie fat-laden drink by blending up to two tablespoons each of unsalted butter and medium-chain triglyceride (MCT) oil into 8 to 12 ounces of coffee. (Proponents recommend starting with one teaspoon of MCT oil and working your way up, since some people report that the oil leads to bloating, gas, and diarrhea.)

That means no protein, fiber, healthy fat, carbs, fruits, or vegetables for breakfast. Just roughly two days’ worth of saturated fat. (The sat fats in MCTs raise LDL, or “bad,” cholesterol, but not as much as the sat fats in butter do.)

Enthusiasts claim that it’s the ketones—which the liver makes when it breaks down MCTs—that keep you focused.

“Pair ketones with the slowly releasing caffeine and you can literally feel your brain turning on,” claims Bulletproof.

The brain usually runs on glucose, or blood sugar. “But when blood glucose levels are low, the brain can use ketones as an alternative fuel source,” says Jason Brandt, a neuropsychologist at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

For example, when researchers made 11 people with



Don’t expect butter coffee to jump-start your brain.

type 1 diabetes score poorly on tests of attention and memory by lowering their blood sugar, MCT oil reversed the decline.¹

But are brains *sharper* when they burn ketones instead of glucose? No human studies have looked.

“The evidence to support the butter coffee trend is all anecdotal,” says Brandt.

The Bottom Line: There’s no evidence that replacing your breakfast with butter coffee “has a massive impact...on cognitive function,” as Bulletproof promises.

¹ [Diabetes 58: 1237, 2009.](#)

SCENTS NONSENSE



Essential oils may not be harmless.

What can essential oils do for you? Use “sweet orange to quell anxiety,” “lavender to sleep better,” and “rosemary for better focus at work,” says [health.com](#).

Essential oils are made by cold-pressing or steam-distilling plant material. They’re usually inhaled as part of “aromatherapy,” though some people recommend swallowing or rubbing them on your skin.

Some studies report subtle effects on anxiety, stress, or thinking ability, but “the quality of the trials is often deplorably low,” says Edzard Ernst, emeritus professor of complementary medicine at the University of Exeter in Britain.

So why do some people swear by essential oils? It may be

the power of suggestion.

In one trial, 90 women inhaled lavender or neroli.¹ Heart rates rose in those who were told that the scent they were smelling was stimulating, and dropped in those who were told that the scent was relaxing. It didn’t matter which scent they smelled.

Essential oils may not just be a waste of money. The National Capital Poison Control Center cautions that they may not be harmless.²

“For topical use, essential oils must be diluted,” says Ernst. “Even then, rashes and allergic reactions are possible. And they are not rare.”

Some oils are dangerous. For example, as little as one teaspoon of wintergreen oil has as much of its active ingredient (salicylate) as roughly 20 aspirins.³ And eucalyptus oil has caused seizures when inhaled, swallowed, applied to the skin, or used as nasal drops.^{4,5}

The Bottom Line: “Aromatherapy is a bit of old-fashioned pampering,” says Ernst. “But therapeutic claims for essential oils are usually bogus. And don’t assume that the oils are harmless if you swallow or rub them on your skin.” 🍊

¹ [Psychol. Rep. 94: 1127, 2004.](#)

² [poison.org/articles/2014-jun/essential-oils.](#)

³ [Int. J. Pediatr. Otorhinolaryngol. 58: 229, 2001.](#)

⁴ [Epilepsia Open 2: 350, 2017.](#)

⁵ [Paediatr. Child Health 6: 80, 2001.](#)

Quick Studies

A snapshot of the latest research on diet, exercise, and more

Blood Pressure & the Brain



Does keeping a lid on your blood pressure help keep your brain sharp as you age?

Researchers randomly assigned 9,361 people aged 50 or older with hypertension to take drugs to lower their systolic blood pressure to one of two targets: less than 140 (standard treatment) or less than 120 (intensive treatment). But after three years, the trial was cut short when it became clear that the

intensive group had a lower risk of strokes, heart attacks, and death.

After the three-year trial and three years of follow-up, there was no difference in “probable dementia” (the primary outcome), although the trial may have been too short to see one. However, the intensive-treatment group had a 19 percent lower risk of mild cognitive impairment than the standard group.

What to do: Aim for a blood pressure of 120 to lower your risk of a heart attack or stroke...and, possibly, to protect your memory and thinking ability.

[JAMA 2019. doi:10.1001/jama.2018.21442.](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2018.21442)

Lightheadedness & Salt

Feel lightheaded when you stand up? Take advice to eat more salt with, um, a grain of salt.

Scientists fed 412 people a typical U.S. diet or a fruit-and-veggie-rich DASH diet with high (3,300 milligrams a day), medium (2,400 mg), or low (1,500 mg) levels of sodium for a month each.

The people reported lightheaded episodes more often on the high- than on the low-sodium DASH diet. Sodium had no impact when they ate a typical U.S. diet.

What to do: Don't assume that extra salt will make you less lightheaded.

[J. Clin. Hypertens. 2019. doi:10.1111/jch.13487.](https://doi.org/10.1111/jch.13487)



Sugar & Liver Fat



Can cutting added sugars trim liver fat? Scientists randomly assigned 40 adolescent boys with non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) to either their usual diet or to a low-sugar diet (which was low in both added sugars and fruit juice). Dietitians planned—and the study provided—all the food for the low-sugar group's families. The usual-diet group got a weekly food stipend.

After eight weeks, liver fat fell—and liver enzymes improved—more in the low-sugar group than in the usual-diet group (though neither liver fat nor enzymes reached normal). But that may be partly because the low-sugar diet was healthier overall. The low-sugar boys lost three pounds while the usual-diet boys gained a pound. (The researchers “adjusted” for that.)

What to do: It's worth cutting back on sugars if you have fatty liver disease, even though, as one study author [told](#) the *New York Times*, “This is a step, it's not the final word.”

[JAMA 321: 256, 2019.](https://doi.org/10.1093/ajph/109.3.445)

Beer Before Wine? You Won't Feel Fine.



“Grape or grain but never the twain.” That's one folk remedy to minimize hangovers. Apparently, no one ever tested the twain.

So researchers randomly assigned 90 people aged 19 to 40 to:

- drink enough beer to reach a breath alcohol concentration (BrAC) of 0.05% and then drink

enough white wine to reach a BrAC of 0.11% (well above the 0.08% limit for adult drivers in most states),

- reach the same BrAC levels with wine *before* beer, or
- reach the same BrAC levels with beer or wine alone.

The order or type of drink had no impact on hangovers.

What to do: Want to dodge a hangover? Drink less. 🍷

[Am. J. Clin. Nutr. 109: 345, 2019.](https://doi.org/10.1093/ajph/109.3.445)



APRIL FOOLS!

Every day is April 1st in the supermarket

BY LINDSAY MOYER & BONNIE LIEBMAN



Looking for healthy almond fat? **Nature Valley Almond Butter Granola Bites** are happy to step up. Only one problem: the Bites have more sugar and palm and palm kernel oil than almond butter. That's because it's almond butter *filling*. Oops!

"Helps support digestive wellness," says **Hi! Happy Inside** cereal. "Prebiotics + probiotics + fiber."

What's "digestive wellness"? The company doesn't have to say. Nor does it need good evidence that Hi! Happy Inside's ingredients deliver.

The cereal's probiotic (*Bifidobacterium lactis* HN019) doesn't do much. And its prebiotic (chicory root fiber) gives you gas. The intact fiber in Happy Inside's whole grains should help with regularity, but no more so than what you'd get from other, less pricey whole-grain cereals.



"100% Daily Value of 13 essential vitamins per serving," says the **Bolthouse Farms Multi-V Goodness Cherry 100% Fruit Juice Smoothie** bottle, which is plastered with pictures of cherries, strawberries, cranberries, and pomegranate.

What's wrong with getting your vitamins from a smoothie? First, most of those vitamins have been added, just like they are in a multivitamin.

Second, *this* "multi" comes with 280 calories per bottle—with more apple juice than any other ingredient. And liquid calories are more likely to lead to weight gain because they don't curb your appetite like solid foods do.

Smoothie, schmoothie. Eat whole fruit.



"Eat like a caveman!" urges the **Wellshire SUGAR FREE Sliced Uncured Turkey Bacon** package. "Paleo Friendly. No Sugar Used."

Who knew that cavemen ate bacon made from "turkey thighs chopped & formed"?

Good thing Wellshire got rid of the sugar. Ordinary bacon has—gasp!—up to 1 gram per serving. That's apparently too much for people on Paleo, Whole30, or similar diets. But processed meat that's linked to a higher risk of colorectal cancer? No problem!



"Antioxidant C and B vitamins," says **V8 Splash Strawberry Kiwi FLAVORED JUICE BEVERAGE**.

Nice going. Surely, some unsuspecting consumers won't notice that instead of strawberries or kiwis, they're getting high-fructose corn syrup, sucralose, red 40 dye, a smidgen of cheap added vitamins, and just 5 percent (carrot) juice.

If there were Scam-of-the-Year awards, V8's parent company, Campbell, would be a contender.



Nuts are in. They're rich in healthy fats that can protect your heart.

So **Nabisco Pistachio Creme ARTIFICIALLY FLAVORED Oreo Thins**

were sort of inevitable. See the pistachios on the package? Too bad the company didn't put any in the Oreos. Dyed green filling is good enough for Nabisco. 🌱

The Healthy Cook

Takeout tonight?

BY KATE SHERWOOD



What's healthier—or tastier—than takeout or delivery? Pair these two dishes for my veggie-rich spin on Chinese food. 🍴

Got a question or suggestion? Write to Kate at healthycook@cspinet.org.

Shiitake Tofu Stir-Fry

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2 Tbs. dry sherry | 1 Tbs. + 2 Tbs. grapeseed oil |
| 2 Tbs. reduced-sodium soy sauce | 8 oz. high-protein (or extra-firm) tofu, cut into triangles |
| 2 tsp. maple syrup | ½ lb. shiitake caps, quartered |
| ½ tsp. grated ginger | ½ tsp. toasted sesame oil |
| 1 tsp. cornstarch | 1 scallion, sliced |
| 1 tsp. mild red chile flakes (optional, see back cover) | |

1. In a small bowl, mix together the sherry, soy sauce, maple syrup, ginger, cornstarch, and chile flakes with ¼ cup of water.
2. In a large non-stick pan, heat 1 Tbs. of the grapeseed oil over medium heat until shimmering hot. Sauté the tofu until browned, 3-5 minutes. Remove from the pan.
3. Increase the heat to high and add the remaining 2 Tbs. of grapeseed oil. Stir-fry the mushrooms until browned, 4-5 minutes.
4. Add the soy sauce mixture to the pan and cook until the sauce thickens, 1-2 minutes.
5. Remove from the heat and stir in the tofu and sesame oil. Top with the scallions.

PER SERVING (2½ cups): calories 410 | total fat 28 g | sat fat 3.5 g | carbs 22 g | fiber 5 g | total sugar 7 g | added sugar 4 g | protein 23 g | sodium 650 mg

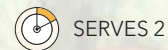


Broccoli with Garlic Sauce

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Tbs. balsamic vinegar | 1 tsp. molasses |
| 2 tsp. reduced-sodium soy sauce | ¼ tsp. cornstarch |
| 3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced | 1 tsp. grapeseed oil |
| | 4 cups broccoli florets |
| | ½ red bell pepper, sliced |

1. In a small bowl, mix together the vinegar, soy sauce, garlic, molasses, and cornstarch with ¼ cup of water.
2. In a large non-stick pan, bring the oil and ⅓ cup of water to a boil over high heat. Add the broccoli and peppers. Stir-fry until the water has evaporated and the vegetables start to brown in spots, 2-3 minutes. Remove from the pan.
3. Add the vinegar mixture to the pan. Cook, stirring constantly, until the mixture is a syrup, 1-2 minutes. Spoon over the vegetables.

PER SERVING (2 cups): calories 100 | total fat 3 g | sat fat 0 g | carbs 15 g | fiber 4 g | total sugar 7 g | added sugar 2 g | protein 5 g | sodium 240 mg



The Dairy Queens

Finding the best soft cheeses, sour cream, and more

BY LINDSAY MOYER

COTTAGE CHEESE

Goodbye, diet-plate staple. Cottage cheese is getting a makeover. Today, it's often flavored and packaged like single-serve yogurts adorned with "probiotic" or "grass fed" claims.

Expect 10 to 15 grams of protein plus 10 to 15 percent of a day's calcium for just 100-or-so calories in ½ cup of any plain low-fat (1% or 2%) cottage cheese. That's impressive.

Too bad the new crop of yogurt look-alikes by **Good Culture**, **Muuna**, and others tosses in sugar-sweetened fruit toppings. Cottage cheese—which lacks the tang of yogurt and has plenty of salt—doesn't need added sugars.

Instead, start with plain and add your own fresh pear, melon, berries, or citrus. Or go savory: think chopped cucumbers or roasted vegetables (peppers, zucchini, eggplant, etc.).

Our plain faves: **Good Culture Low-Fat 2% Classic** and **Daisy Low Fat 2%**. Both have a creamy texture without added gums or thickeners. And Good Culture—with just 280 milligrams of sodium per half cup—is less salty than most.

Look for: No added sugars and no more than 1½ grams of sat fat and 350 mg of sodium in ½ cup.

RICOTTA

You're unlikely to find "fat free," "low fat," or "light" ricotta these days. Your best bet is part-skim, which has 2½ to 3 grams of saturated fat per ¼-cup serving.

And don't forget ricotta's cousin, farmer cheese. Often made from lower-fat milk (with or without added salt), it has no more sat fat than part-skim ricotta. Spoon farmer cheese

Americans may be knee-deep in pizza, mac 'n cheese, and cheeseburgers, but there's more to the dairy case than mozzarella and cheddar.

Here's a guide to the best-tasting soft cheeses that have shed some of their unhealthy (saturated) fat and sodium. Check the photos for our dairy (and plant-based) favorites.

The information for this article was compiled by Jolene Mafnas & Jennifer Urban.

over tacos, tostadas, or an arugula-and-fruit salad, suggests our Healthy Cook, Kate Sherwood. Or stuff some inside a spinach or mushroom lasagna or in blintzes or crepes.

Ditching dairy? Try **Kite Hill Ricotta Alternative**, which is made from cultured almond milk. Nut ricotta is lower in saturated fat—and higher in healthy almond fat—than

part-skim ricotta. But Kite Hill lacks the calcium and packs double the sodium of most dairy ricottas.

Look for: No more than 3 grams of sat fat and 100 mg of sodium in ¼ cup.

CREAM CHEESE

Don't be fooled: Cream cheese is more cream than cheese. Two (level) tablespoons typically supply just 1 or 2 grams of protein and less than 5 percent of a day's calcium, but 4½ to 6 grams of saturated fat and around 100 calories.

Many "whipped" (fluffy) or "light" cream cheeses shave off about half the sat fat. (Beware of fruit varieties, which typically add more sugar than strawberries, blueberries, etc.)

Or consider labne. While most brands were slightly over our sat-fat limit, the thick, delightfully tangy yogurt cheese is worth a try. And think beyond the bagel or toast. Use leftover labne as a base for herby salad dressings, a spread for falafel- or veggie-stuffed pitas, or a topper for other Mediterranean dishes.

As for the dairy-frees, **Kite Hill Cream Cheese Style Spreads** (made from almonds) have nearly twice the sodium



Good Culture Low-Fat 2% Classic Cottage Cheese. Just add your own fresh fruit.



365 Part-Skim Ricotta. Whole Foods' ricotta delivers a creamy texture.



Philadelphia Original Whipped Cream Cheese. A light, fluffy tub.



Karoun Original Labne. A yogurt cheese to try on your toast and more.



Kite Hill Plain Cream Cheese Style Spread. One of the best dairy-frees.



Daisy Light Sour Cream. The smoothest light sour cream around.



Fage 2% Greek Yogurt. Any plain yogurt has less sat fat than regular sour cream.



Vermont Creamery Quark. A mild soft cheese. Think less-tart Greek yogurt.

of our Best Bites. But they trounce the coconut-oil-and-starch versions like **Daiya Cream Cheeze Style Spread** and **Violife Just Like Cream Cheese**.

Look for: *No added sugars and no more than 3 grams of sat fat and 100 mg of sodium in 2 Tbs.*

SOUR CREAM

Just about any “light,” “low fat,” or “reduced-fat” sour cream is a Best Bite, but **Daisy Light** was our top taste pick.

New squeezable **Chobani Savor** repurposes plain low-fat or whole-milk Greek yogurt as a sour cream sub. Brilliant! Still, for our stand-in we preferred the taste of **Fage 2% Greek Yogurt**.

Tip: Stir yogurt or low-fat sour cream into sauces *after* taking them off the heat so they’re less likely to separate.

Look for: *No added sugars and no more than 2 grams of sat fat and 30 mg of sodium in 2 Tbs.*

CRÈME FRAÎCHE, MASCARPONE, & QUARK

Mascarpone (the cheese in tiramisu) and crème fraîche are essentially cultured cream. So it’s no surprise that just two tablespoons of either has 7 to 10 grams of saturated fat (a third to half a day’s worth) and tops 100 calories.

Instead, spoon quark over your fresh fruit or other desserts, for just 35 calories in two tablespoons. The mild soft cheese is pleasantly thick and tart. It can also stand in for sour cream.

Look for: *No more than 2 grams of sat fat in 2 Tbs.*

SPREADABLE CHEESE & BRIE

Some lower-fat spreadables—like **The Laughing Cow** and **Alouette Reduced Fat**—didn’t wow us. But who needs ‘em, when **Chavrie Purely Goat Original** tastes divine? Bonus: Its

mild flavor is a good way to ease newbies into goat cheese.

Searching for a plant-based spreadable that actually tastes like cheese? It’s hard to believe that **Treeline Creamy Soft French-Style** is made from nuts, not dairy. And spreading cultured cashews on your crostini or crackers means dodging most of dairy’s sat fat. Win-win.

Memo to brie fans: **Président Light** and **Trader Joe’s Light** cut the sat fat to 2½ grams per ounce. If only full-fat will do, look for mini brie bites from **Ile de France** or **Trader Joe’s**, with 4 grams of sat fat apiece. That’s less than cheddar.

Look for: *No more than 3 grams of sat fat and 180 mg of sodium in 2 Tbs. (spreadables) or in 1 oz. (brie).*

FETA

Feta’s Achilles’ heel? Salt. Many feta cheeses hit 350 to 450 milligrams of sodium per ounce. That makes **Président Reduced Fat Crumbles** (with just 260 mg) a winner.

Feta’s upside: Even some full-fats—like **Whole Foods 365 Crumbled Feta**—don’t top 3 grams of saturated fat per ounce.

Look for: *No more than 2 grams of sat fat and 300 mg of sodium in 1 oz.*

FRESH GOAT CHEESE

We didn’t find any reduced-fat goat cheeses, but plenty of regulars have just 3½ grams of saturated fat per ounce. Sodium? No problem. Few top 100 milligrams. Our tasters’ favorite: **Trader Joe’s Creamy, Fresh Chevre** log.

Need just a little goat cheese for your salad or crackers? Individually wrapped medallions from **Montchevre** will wait patiently in your refrigerator until you’re ready for them.

Look for: *No added sugars and no more than 3½ grams of sat fat in 1 oz.* 🍷



Treeline Creamy Soft French-Style Scallion. The best-tasting soft nut cheese.



Chavrie Purely Goat Original. A super creamy and mild goat cheese spread.



Président Reduced Fat Feta Crumbles. Less sat fat and sodium, but plenty of flavor.



Trader Joe’s Creamy, Fresh Chevre. Also good: TJ’s Goat’s Milk Creamy Cheese.

Cheese, Please

For our Best Bite (✓✓) criteria, check the “Look for” paragraph at the end of each section in the text. Cheeses are ranked from least to most saturated fat, then sodium, then most to least protein, then calcium.

Cottage Cheese (½ cup, unless noted)

	Calories	Sat Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	Protein (g)	Calcium (% DV)
✓✓ Good Culture Low-Fat 2% Classic	80	0.5	280	14	10
Good Culture Low-Fat 2% flavored (5.3 oz.) ^{1*}	120	1	320	16	15
✓✓ Good Culture Low-Fat 2% Classic (5.3 oz.)	110	1	380	19	15
✓✓ Breakstone’s Lowfat 2% 30% Less Sodium	90	1.5	270	10	10
✓✓ Breakstone’s Lowfat 2%	90	1.5	340	10	15
✓✓ Muuna Lowfat 2% Plain	90	1.5	350	14	10
✓✓ Daisy Low Fat 2%	90	1.5	350	13	10
Muuna 2% flavored (5.3 oz.) ^{1*}	120	1.5	370	15	15
Breakstone’s Live Active Lowfat 2%	80	1.5	370	10	10
Good Culture Organic Whole Milk Classic	110	3	350	14	10

Ricotta (¼ cup)

Kite Hill Ricotta Alternative	160	1	230	4	0
✓✓ Lifeway Farmer Cheese	70	2	20	8	25
✓✓ Galbani Made with Part Skim Milk	80	2.5	65	5	15
✓✓ 365 (Whole Foods) Part-Skim	80	3	70	6	15
✓✓ Trader Joe’s Part Skim	70	3	80	4	20
Friendship Farmer Cheese	70	3	220	8	0
365 (Whole Foods) Whole Milk	100	4.5	50	6	10

Cream Cheese (2 Tbs., tub, unless noted)

Kite Hill Cream Cheese Style Spread ¹	70	0.5	170	2	0
✓✓ Philadelphia Whipped—Chive or Original ¹	50	2.5	90	1	2
✓✓ Trader Joe’s Soft Spreadable Light	70	3	95	4	4
Trader Joe’s Organic Light Whipped	60	3	105	3	8
Karoun Original Labne	60	3.5	75	1	2
Philadelphia ⅓ Less Fat, brick or tub ¹	70	4	120	2	4
Philadelphia Original	80	4.5	125	2	4
Daiya Plain Cream Cheese Style Spread*	80	5	120	1	0
Philadelphia Original, brick	100	6	110	2	2
Violife Just Like Cream Cheese Original	70	6	140	0	0

Sour Cream (2 Tbs.)

✓✓ Chobani Savor Low-Fat Greek Yogurt	20	0	10	3	2
Breakstone’s Fat Free*	30	0	25	1	4
✓✓ Fage 2% Greek Yogurt	20	0.5	10	3	4
✓✓ Chobani Savor Whole Milk Greek Yogurt	30	1	10	3	2
✓✓ 365 (Whole Foods) Organic Low Fat	40	1.5	20	2	6
✓✓ Trader Joe’s Light	40	1.5	30	2	6
✓✓ Breakstone’s Reduced Fat	40	2	20	1	6
✓✓ Daisy Light	40	2	25	2	4
Tofutti Better Than Sour Cream*	90	2	160	1	0
Daisy	60	3.5	15	1	2
Wallaby Organic Cultured	100	7	10	1	2

Crème Fraîche, Mascarpone, & Quark (2 Tbs.)

✓✓ Vermont Creamery Fromage Blanc 0% Fat	20	0	40	3	4
✓✓ Vermont Creamery Quark	35	1	40	2	4
Alouette Crème Fraîche	110	7	10	1	2
BelGioioso Mascarpone	120	10	10	2	6

Spreadable Cheese (2 Tbs., unless noted)

	Calories	Sat Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	Protein (g)	Calcium (% DV)
✓✓ Treeline Creamy Soft French-Style ¹	90	1	95	4	0
✓✓ The Laughing Cow—except Queso Fresco & Chipotle (1 wedge) ¹	30	1	180	3	8
The Laughing Cow Queso Fresco & Chipotle (1 wedge)	30	1	190	2	8
✓✓ Président Rondelé Light Garlic & Herbs	45	2	135	2	4
✓✓ Trader Joe’s Goat’s Milk Creamy Cheese	45	2	140	3	4
✓✓ Vermont Creamery Spreadable Goat ¹	45	2.5	90	2	2
✓✓ Alouette Reduced Fat Garlic & Herbs	45	2.5	120	1	2
✓✓ Chavrie Purely Goat Original	50	3	125	3	2
Alouette Spinach & Artichoke	60	3.5	115	1	2
Kaukauna Sharp Cheddar	80	3.5	160	4	10
Alouette Toasted Everything	70	4	90	1	2
Président Rondelé Garlic & Herbs	70	4.5	135	2	2

Brie (1 oz.)

Président or Trader Joe’s Light	70	2.5	230	7	15
Ile de France or Trader Joe’s Brie Bites ¹	70	4	160	4	10
Président	100	5	140	5	10
Trader Joe’s Double Creme	100	6	160	5	10
Trader Joe’s Triple Creme	110	7	160	4	10

Feta (1 oz.)

✓✓ Président Fat Free, chunk or crumbled ¹	35	0	260	7	10
✓✓ Trader Joe’s Fat Free Crumbled	35	0	260	7	10
Athenos Fat Free Traditional Crumbled	30	0	430	7	15
Trader Joe’s Light chunk	40	1	370	5	10
✓✓ Président Reduced Fat Crumbles	60	2	260	6	15
Athenos Reduced Fat Traditional Crumbled	50	2	340	5	6
365 (Whole Foods) Crumbled	70	3	340	6	10
Président Crumbles	70	3.5	260	5	10
Athenos Traditional Crumbled	70	3.5	330	5	6
Trader Joe’s Authentic Greek Feta in Brine	80	4	340	5	15
Mt Vikos Traditional chunk	80	5	340	4	8

Fresh Goat Cheese (1 oz.)

✓✓ Montchevre Medallions	70	3.5	40	5	4
Montchevre Honey log*	80	3.5	55	5	4
✓✓ Vermont Creamery Classic Crumbled	70	3.5	55	5	2
✓✓ Montchevre log—Fig & Olive, Garlic & Herbs, Lemon, or Natural ¹	70	3.5	70	5	4
✓✓ Trader Joe’s Chevre log—Fine Herbs, Silver, Wild Blueberry Vanilla, or Creamy, Fresh ¹	70	3.5	70	5	4
✓✓ Montchevre Crumbled Onion Basil	80	3.5	85	5	6
✓✓ 365 (Whole Foods) log	70	3.5	115	5	2
Vermont Creamery log	80	4	60	5	2
Trader Joe’s Chevre Cranberry log*	80	4	125	4	4
Alouette Crumbled	80	4.5	135	5	2

✓✓ Best Bite. ¹Average of the entire line or the varieties listed.
* Contains added sugars.

Daily Limits (for a 2,000-calorie diet): **Saturated Fat:** 20 grams.
Sodium: 2,300 milligrams.

Protein Daily Target: 85 grams. **Calcium Daily Value (DV):** 1,000 milligrams.
Note: % DVs for calcium are based on the old Nutrition Facts label, which is still on most foods. The new label has a higher DV (1,300 mg).
Source: company information. The use of information from this article for commercial purposes is strictly prohibited without written permission from CSPI.



RIGHT STUFF

Fast Food



Tofu is firming up. Take **Wildwood Organic's** "super firm" vacuum-packed **High Protein**.

It's denser than water-packed tofu, so it can go straight from package to pan, with no draining or pressing. Simply open, then cube or slice.

Bonus: Less water means that you get more protein per bite or per serving (15 grams in roughly three ounces) than you'd get from water-packed firm (8 grams) or extra-firm (9 grams) tofu.

Not too shabby for 140 calories' worth of plant protein that's low in saturated fat and easier on the planet than red meat, poultry, cheese, or any other animal protein. And tofu also supplies some iron, magnesium, and healthy fat.

Tofu soaks up whatever flavors you add to it, and goes from pan to plate in minutes. It's easy to cook...yet hard to overcook. Curry? Stir-fry? Tacos? Done and dusted.

Use super-firm tofu in any recipe that calls for firm or extra-firm. A great place to start: succulent Shiitake Tofu Stir-Fry from *The Healthy Cook*, Kate Sherwood (see p. 12). Mmm...

Can't find Wildwood? Look for another vacuum-packed brand. **Trader Joe's Organic High Protein Tofu** and **Hodo Organic Firm Tofu** are two good bets.

wildwoodfoods.com—(800) 588-7782

Photos: Jennifer Urban/CSP (top left & right), Kate Sherwood & Jennifer Urban/CSP (middle & bottom).

FOOD PORN



Megalomanimac

"A meal that's so big, it just cannot be contained," says **Banquet's** website.

"That's why we created **Mega**, featuring huge portions of your favorite foods, with even bigger portions of your favorite foods piled on top."



Way to go,

Conagra (Banquet's corporate parent). With 70 percent of adults now overweight or obese, "huge" and "even bigger" portions are precisely what America needs!

And those "favorite foods" must also be favorites in Conagra's bean-counting department. We're talking deep-dish pot pies (mostly cheap white flour) stuffed with fillings like mac 'n cheese (more white flour).

The carb-heavy **Mega Deep Dish Bacon Mac 'N Cheese** pot pie packs 1,000 calories—what you'd get in *three* Banquet non-mega chicken pot pies. And don't forget its day's worth of saturated fat (22 grams) and nearly three-quarters of a day's sodium (1,660 milligrams).

The **Buffalo-Style Chicken Mac 'N Cheese** (970 calories) and the pork-and-beef meatball, pepperoni, and cheese-stuffed **Meat Lovers** (960 calories) deep-dish pot pies aren't far behind.

But don't worry. When those extra calories "just cannot be contained" in our fat cells, we'll simply build more!

Thanks so much for the megabites, Banquet.

banquet.com—(877) CONAGRA



DISH of the month

Greek Lentil Salad

Whisk together the zest and juice of ½ lemon, 2 Tbs. olive oil, ¼ tsp. salt, and a pinch of dried oregano. Toss with 1 cup cooked lentils, 1 cup diced cucumber, ¼ cup toasted walnuts, and 1 Tbs. chopped dill. Serves 2.

quick tip

Want chili pepper's *flavor* without its kick? Korean chile flakes (gochugaru) are earthy, smoky, and mild enough to put on everything from eggs to pasta primavera. Our go-to brand: Mother in Law's.

